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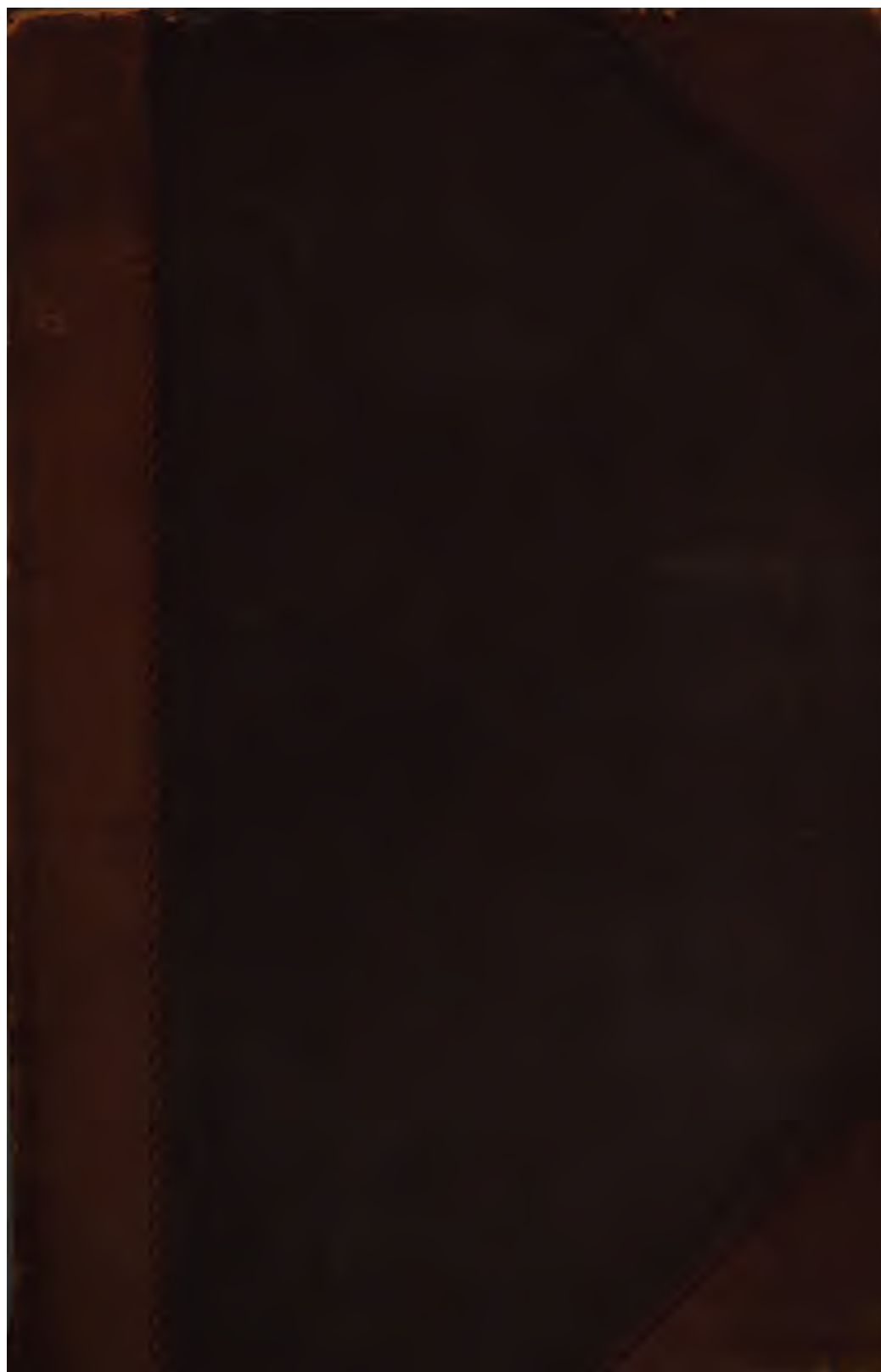
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THE
HISTORY AND OBLIGATION
OF THE
SABBATH.

A DISSERTATION WHICH OBTAINED THE HULSEAN PRIZE
FOR THE YEAR 1843.

BY
C. J. ELLICOTT, B.A.,
SCHOLAR OF SAINT JOHN'S COLLEGE.

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*CLAUSES directed by the FOUNDER to be always prefixed
to the HULSEAN DISSERTATION.*

CLAUSES from the WILL of the Rev. JOHN HULSE, late of Elworth, in the County of Chester, clerk, deceased: dated the twenty-first day of July, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven; expressed in the words of the Testator, as he, in order to prevent mistakes, thought proper to draw and write the same himself, and directed that such clauses should every year be printed, to the intent that the several persons, whom it might concern and be of service to, might know that there were such special donations or endowments left for the encouragement of Piety and Learning, in an age so unfortunately addicted to Infidelity and Luxury, and that others might be invited to the like charitable, and, as he humbly hoped, seasonable and useful Benefactions.

He directs that certain rents and profits (now amounting to about a hundred pounds yearly) be paid to such learned and ingenious person, in the University of Cambridge, under the degree of Master of Arts, as shall compose, for that year, the best Dissertation, in the English language, on the Evidences in general, or on the Prophecies or Miracles in particular, or any other particular Argument, whether the same be direct or collateral proofs of the

Christian Religion, in order to evince its truth and excellence; the subject of which Dissertation shall be given out by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Masters of Trinity and Saint John's, his Trustees, or by some of them, on New Year's Day annually; and that such Dissertation as shall be by them, or any two of them, on Christmas Day annually, the best approved, be also printed, and the expence defrayed out of the Author's income under his Will, and the remainder given to him on Saint John the Evangelist's Day following; and he who shall be so rewarded, shall not be admitted at any future time as a Candidate again in the same way, to the intent that others may be invited and encouraged to write on so sacred and sublime a subject.

He also desires, that immediately following the last of the clauses relating to the prize Dissertation, this invocation may be added: "May the Divine Blessing for ever go along with all my benefactions; and may the Greatest and the Best of Beings, by his all-wise Providence and gracious influence, make the same effectual to his own glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures!"

Subject proposed by the TRUSTEES for the Year 1843:

"The Obligation of the Sabbath, with a History of the Institution, and its influence from the earliest times to the present day."

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

AMONG all the controversies which have prevailed in the Church, no one has had a longer existence than that on sabbatical institutions. It has been, and still remains, unlike all other controversies on rites and ceremonies; as these for the most part either resolve themselves into differences arising from the peculiar customs of the upholding parties, or into two opinions, of which one is manifestly false, and may be proved so by the express words of Holy Writ. Of this latter kind are the disputes with the Church of Rome, on the adoration of images, the granting of dispensations and pardons, the supremacy of the Pope, and similar tenets, which bear the stamp of their own condemnation. Again, the sabbatical controversy differs widely from the conflicts of opinion that have arisen upon the introduction of a newfangled doctrine into the Church: for in such cases, the strife has been oftentimes sore and obstinate, but never of very long continuance. The unsearchable wisdom of God has permitted heretical opinions to prevail for a season, that thus the zeal and constancy of true believers might be more surely tested, and their energies more effectually sum-

moned forth to the battle in the cause of truth. And the truth has always prevailed: the storm of controversy has either wholly died away, or after losing its more lowering aspect, has continued to break with diminished violence over the rock of the Church, though at the same time it has frequently changed its intensity and direction only to attack a more unguarded quarter. The graver errors of Arianism, after their stronger tendencies had been mercifully repressed, were destined to reappear in the heresy of Eutyches, and the defeat of Eutyches served only to be a note of preparation to the Monothelite. Each period in the history of the Church can bear witness to the more immediate influence of some peculiar heresy: each age has had its own accusing angel.

But the sabbatarian controversy has remained unchanged; the opinions of the contending parties have suffered but little modification by the lapse of time, or by the various vicissitudes of the Catholic Church. This is possibly in a great measure attributable to the very nature of the case; as the obligation of the Sabbath, from which all minor questions must descend, as streams from the fountain-head, is still a subject of thoughtful enquiry. For even supposing it universally admitted, as indeed it must be, that the moral law was perfected and completed by Christ, it is still uncertain how far the fourth commandment is to be considered a part of the moral law, and consequently what relation subsists between it and the

ordinances of the present Christian Sabbath. These main points of enquiry remain the same now as they did nearly two thousand years ago.

Another difference may yet be noted between this controversy and all others, whether upon ritual or doctrinal points:—that it has never been the cause of a wide schism or a protracted feud in the Church. The nearest approach to a division upon the subject was as late as the seventh century, when the Trullan Council animadverted on the practice in the Romish Church, of fasting upon the Sabbath or Saturday, though all churches alike agreed to reverence the Sunday or Lord's Day with Christian festivity. It may thus be asserted that the enquiries into the obligation and observance of the Sabbath, considered with reference to the Lord's Day, did not involve those grievous scenes of open violence and sinful wrath which are recorded in the history of the primitive Church; when the "vestment of the king's daughter" was rent by hands, which raised a man of blood to an episcopal throne, and drove its aged possessor a wanderer into the Egyptian deserts. It may be said, that the controversy was not of sufficient character to have so far aroused the bitterness and evil passions of men. Still the question was one of deep and lasting importance. It was propounded alike to all, in terms that admitted neither evasion nor neglect: "Dost thou by thine outward worship testify that

¹ Augustin, Epist. 36, to Casulanus, applies this appellation to the Church.

thou art under the law of grace, or under that of works? Dost thou openly declare that thou believest in Him who was Lord of the Sabbath, or clingest thou to the weak and beggarly elements of the law?" Upon the answers to these questions hang the greatest Christian verities.

But if there be a feeling of satisfaction on the one hand, in viewing this subject, as one that has not been sullied by the exhibitions of outward violence or deep-seated rancour,—there must be, on the other hand, a sense of depression and uncertainty when we survey the magnitude of the topic upon which we are embarked, and the various opinions that have been entertained, with greater or less appearances of probability, for more than eighteen centuries. Some portions of the subject may perhaps be referable in a certain degree to definite and unchangeable principles: yet there are others upon which good men of every age have arrived at such opposite results, that it is not unnatural for one who is about to launch forth into the deep sea of controversy, to fear that without any certain guiding light he may be left to the idle buffetting of the waves. If this be a natural fear, it will be surely no more than common prudence to abstain carefully from every appearance of dogmatism, to disallow mere statements, and to accept only direct evidence. Where evidence fails, we must have recourse to such probable inferences as have been formed by those whose positions afforded them the best opportunities of judging.

This will perhaps be rendered more easy, if the character of the controversy during its various periods be briefly reviewed, as thus an undue prominence will not be assigned to opinions and statements which were made before the subject had elicited precise definitions and a distinct and guarded phraseology.

In the earlier ages of the Church, as Bishop Taylor well remarks, such floods of religion overspread the land, that the observance of the Lord's Day and the Sabbath was maintained with nearly equal solemnities; they were, as Gregory of Nyssa terms them, yoke-fellows¹ and twin sisters, being alike handmaidens to Him who was Lord of the Sabbath. Still the fathers are everywhere distinct and explicit in their language: whenever the Sabbath arrogated to itself those elements of ritual observance and superstitious rest which were entombed with Christ, but were never to rise again, they fearlessly denounce it,—they speak of it as a forgotten dream, they warn their disciples from it with an energy of expression, which, if other testimony failed, could leave no doubt of their sincerity and truthfulness. Against such as affected any Jewish ordinances on the Sabbath the early councils direct their gravest censures²; and even within six centuries after the birth of Christ, Sabbatism was branded by Gregory the Great as a mark of the beast, and a sign of Antichrist³. As we advance in the history of the Church, we find the Sabbath slowly and imper-

¹ διπλὴν ξυνωρίδα τοῦ σαββάτου καὶ τῆς κυριακῆς. See p.

² Concil. Laod. Can. 29.

³ Lib. xi. Ep. 3.

ceptibly declining: still there were not wanting troubled and unquiet spirits, who sought to disturb the tranquillity of the Church by calling in question the origin of the Lord's Day, and contrasting it with that of the Sabbath, which, as they said, was coeval with the creation of the world, while that of the Lord's Day could scarcely be traced to the apostolic age. The controversy then began by slow degrees to assume a more definite form, till at length, after the Reformation, Christian writers no longer contended about mere Judaical rites, but rigorously examined the nature of the obligation to keep holy a seventh day, and the claims of the fourth commandment to a place in the moral law, of which not one jot nor one tittle was to pass away. It was however universally admitted that the Lord's Day was a fitting period for the worship of God, and that it was sanctioned by its duration from the apostolic times, without opposition or interruption. They therefore who maintained the eternal obligation of the fourth commandment, further contended that all the observances which under the Old Covenant belonged to the seventh, were now transferred to the first day in the week, although they were wholly unable to show the faintest trace in Holy Writ of such a compromise between the bondage of the Law and the liberty of the Gospel. This assumption however paved the way for a further enquiry into the possibility of such a transfer, and thus finally the arguments of both parties became referable to one of two distinct allega-

tions: it being maintained, on the one hand, that the observance of the Sabbath was part of the moral law, that the Lord's Day assumed the place of the Sabbath, and that consequently its observance was a part of the moral law. The opposite party, on the other hand, contend, that the Sabbath was a positive enactment of God, solely for the Jewish people, and that the Lord's Day was introduced after the resurrection of Christ upon the authority of the early Church.

If such appear to be the true account of the present state of the controversy, it will be necessary,—first, to enquire into *the origin* of the day, as this will go far to decide whether the fourth commandment is part of the eternal and unchangeable law of God, or whether it was ordained for the Jewish nation alone. It will then be convenient to trace its progress from the creation of the world down to the resurrection of Christ; and this again will suggest the second important question, whether it were then modified, or positively abrogated. And, lastly, the history of the progress and influence of the Lord's Day, from its first institution down to the present day, will suggest the answer to the difficult but all-important question, “Upon what authority do Christians now dedicate the first day of the week to the service of God?” Such appears to be the most natural train of argument: the third question flows directly from the second, which is again itself greatly dependent on the first. The origin and obligation of sab-

batical institutions will form the first division of this Dissertation, while the second part will comprise an account of their various changes down to our own times.

Two points however claim a preliminary notice, which belongs most fitly to this place, as the nature of the argument will require, from its very outset, distinctness and precision, and these can only be attained by guarded and accurate definitions. The first is the difference in the nature of *moral* and *positive* laws: the second, the appellations which apply most fitly to this weekly festival, when respectively considered under the two dispensations.

First then, all laws may be divided into two general classes; the one involving commands absolutely moral, such as laws enjoining the worship of a God, forbidding murder, rapine, theft, &c.; the other, containing such as are relatively moral, of which kind are laws commanding abstinence from blood and things strangled, laws confining the worship of God to a particular place and time, with others of a like nature. These are sometimes called *positive*, as they could not have been discovered by the dictates of conscience, unassisted by Divine revelation. The criteria of absolutely moral laws are three: first, that the thing commanded or forbidden be in its inward essence good or evil before the passing of the law: secondly, that it admit of being resolved into one of the acknowledged principles of the law of nature: and thirdly, that it has obtained universally. If all these

three points be wanting in any particular instance, such a law must be considered at once a portion of the positive law; or, as it is technically termed, the *jus divinum positivum*. Now it frequently happens that some laws may satisfy one only of the criteria, or all less absolutely and precisely than the definition requires. As in the example before us; there was nothing inwardly and essentially good in the seventh day that it should be peculiarly set aside for the service of God; at the same time the worship of God is the first rule of the great law of nature. Nor was the Sabbath of universal observance, for the few statements of Josephus, Philo, and Clement of Alexandria, which will be cited in a succeeding chapter, allude only to a distorted view of the prevalence of the Sabbath, and cannot be adduced as proofs of its universality. Here then is an example which seems indirectly to satisfy one criterion, while it fails in another. It cannot be considered part of the moral law, nor can it be classed strictly under the positive law, as it so nearly satisfies one of the criteria of the moral law. In fact, it partakes of the nature of both laws to such an extent, that all arguments grounded upon its belonging to one class or other, must be nugatory and unsatisfying. This perhaps is the reason why this ancient controversy remains undecided—this is the root which has spread bitterness among all the waters that flowed from the well-head of Truth. The one party, either directly asserting or tacitly assuming that the Sabbath was a part of the moral law, perceived not that

their position was untenable if they adhered to the strict definition of the moral law; and so in their efforts to exhibit the perfect conformity of this law with those of nature and conscience, they unwittingly quilted and overlaced the naked reality of truth. Nor were the other party in a less error who endeavoured to number sabbatical institutions among the ordinances of the positive law; as they placed this ancient festival upon a like foundation with the ceremonial and judicial ordinances of the old Covenant, whose origin and extinction were contemporary with the rise and fall of the Jewish race. The fourth commandment was claimed by the one party as a distinct proof of the primary morality of the Sabbath, from its place among commandments which were nearly all transcripts of the great law of nature; while it has been utterly disallowed by the opponents, as having no reference whatever to those who walk not amid the shadows of the positive law, but in the day-spring of the New Covenant¹.

This latent cause of controversy was first clearly brought to light by Bishop Sanderson². Distinctly perceiving that they who considered the Christian Sabbath to be a branch of the law of nature, were as far from the truth as they who referred it simply to the positive laws of God, or to ecclesiastical authority; he proved that there were also other ordinances which fell

¹ It is proper to state, that the Ten Commandments were not inserted in any of the early liturgies of the Church.—Vide Palmer's *Liturgy*.

² "Cases of Conscience."

directly under neither of these codes, inasmuch as they partook more or less of both. From a comparison of these ordinances with those of the positive and moral law, he was enabled to discover the existence of a certain kind of *jus divinum positivum* to which the Christian Sabbath naturally belonged. This may, for the sake of distinction, be called *the great rule of equity*, as differing alike from the great rule of conscience and from the positive enactments of God. Its existence, (as Bishop Sanderson has well shewn,) may be proved by the concurrence of the following points in any particular law:—

I. A foundation of equity either in the law of nature or by virtue of divine institutions.

II. An analogy with particular laws given to the Jews.

III. Some probable insinuations in the Scriptures.

IV. The continued practice of the Christian Church.

These four elements are applicable to several other questions which have been agitated from the Apostolic ages to the present time, such as the government of bishops, the solemn imposition of hands, and the extent of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. Furthermore, this rule gives a full and sufficient answer to all doubts which can arise about the change of any ordinance by the tacit usage, or open decree of the Church, as in the example now before us. For it is evident that all portions of the moral law are wholly unchangeable;

that those of the positive law can be repealed only by God himself; which may be effected by the express declaration of the Author, or the dissolution of the polity to which they were especially revealed:—that those of the great rule of equity do certainly admit of alteration by the Church, but only in cases of most extreme necessity.

But even thus it will be difficult to argue closely upon this question, unless in the next place a certain nomenclature be agreed upon, by which the Jewish and Christian Sabbaths may be distinguished from one another. For the sake therefore of avoiding obscurity, the usage of the Fathers and early writers of the Church will be strictly followed. The Christian Sabbath, or Sunday, will in all cases be termed the *Lord's Day*; while the Jewish Sabbath, or Saturday, will retain, conformably to its derivation, its distinctive character of rest, under the express name of the *Sabbath*. The early Christian writers¹ occasionally used the appellation Sunday, but it was principally when addressing heathens who named their days after the planets: for, in their writings to Christians, the same day is invariably denominated the Lord's Day. This title was also awarded by the Roman emperors, Constantine, Valentinian the First and Second, and Theodosius senior and junior, in their laws enforcing its particular observance. Valentinian the younger² speaks of it on one occasion as "Sunday, which those

¹ Tertull. *Apolog.* 11. Cap. 16. Justin Martyr. *Apolog.* 11.

² "Solis die, quem Dominicum rite dixere majores."

of the old time rightly called the Lord's Day." And the injunctions of Pope Sylvester, that the days of the week should be defined numerically, as the first, second, third, &c. rather than after the manner of the heathen, would seem to prove that the planetary denomination was not much used in the early Church; while the term *Lord's Day* served to call attention to the nature of the worship, as being commemorative of the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was also called *dies Panis*, or the day of bread, from the perpetual celebration of the Eucharist thereon³.—On the other hand, the Jewish Sabbath is best denoted by a word which most plainly alludes to actual cessation from bodily labour.

Having laid down these necessary definitions, we now proceed to fill up the outlines of argument by devoting the succeeding chapter to a rigorous investigation of the Origin and Obligation of the Sabbath as mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, or as directly deducible from the events recorded therein.

³ Bingham xx. c. 2.

CHAPTER II.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SABBATH, AND ITS OBLIGATION UPON THE PATRIARCHS.

It has been shown in the foregoing chapter that a great portion of the arguments, raised by the two parties in the sabbatarian controversy, rest upon the origin of the day, and the circumstances attending its first promulgation. For if it can be demonstrated that a day was set apart in the beginning of time for religious exercises, having, as it were, the seal of God impressed upon it from the very day-spring of the world, then it will follow of necessity that all mankind have been constantly bound unto its observance, and will continue to be so, until time and the divisions thereof shall have passed away. This would at once supersede all other argument: the only remaining question would be, which day of the seven ought to be the universal festival of mankind; and whether the religious ordinances thereon could admit of any transfer from one day to another, upon the authority of the Catholic Church,—and, lastly, whether any such authority had been exercised?—If, on the contrary, it can be proved that the first authoritative mention of the Sabbath was in the wilderness, and

especially to the Jews, that it was a sign of a covenant between God and his people,—and that it stood upon the same grounds as the passover and other parts of the ceremonial law; it will follow, that as the other ceremonial observances were abrogated by the Gospel, the Sabbath fell with them; and that, consequently, the only point for investigation is the authority of the Lord's Day, and a history of its origin and progress.

These are the two extreme opinions: they correspond to the two first positions mentioned in the first chapter, in which the Sabbath is considered either as a portion of the positive law, or as graven on the inward tablets of the heart. As in that case it appeared unwise, and even positively erroneous, to yield a blind adherence to either extreme, so, in the question of the origin of the day, it appears most prudent to follow out neither of the foregoing lines of argument, but to enquire independently, first, whether Scripture, and, secondly, whether reason, does not point to the existence of a Sabbath from the very earliest times; which day did, in after ages, receive additional sanctions, and was for great and wise purposes rigorously imposed upon a stubborn and rebellious people.

It is indeed impossible to suppose that some definite day should not have been devoted to public worship even in the earliest ages of the world. For the worship of a God is allowed by all to be the first principle of the great law of nature; and as this must have been done at some appointed time, and limited in its continuance, the natural conveniency and fitness of

things would have suggested a recurrence at equal intervals of time. In a word, festivals are the great elements of all religions, and, even indirectly, of all civil governments. They may have arisen among the heathens, as Seneca imagines¹, from the natural desire of men to enjoy a freedom from the daily sorrows and cares which accompanied them. Perceiving that rest "was the perfection of all things that labour," they assigned even to the material objects around them periods for imaginary ease and relaxation. The very sun was imagined to sleep in the waters, and to regain light and energy for the toilsome course of the succeeding day, and the winds to slumber in caverns, till they were summoned forth from their fabled repose. The constant observation of this unchanging law tended to bring before them the first element of all festivals, cessation from labour. And when they were enjoying that grateful respite from wearisome occupations and painful cares, they were not far from the second element, thankfulness and praise. Plato indeed considered festivals of so divine a nature, and so necessary to the very existence of mankind, that he assigned the origin to the gods, "who alone sustain and preserve the human race²." Thus reason acknowledges to a certain point the substance of these duties; but as to the nature and performance of these duties, and their stated recurrence, higher authority must be sought for than the feeble glimmerings of probability.

¹ De Tranquillo Animo.

² Plato *De Legibus*, Lib. II. § 653.

The foregoing observations are however not without their use, as introductory to an investigation of the Scriptures: they prepare us, before we open the sacred volume, to expect an early notice of festivals and days of relaxation, during which the Author of peace might be more uninterruptedly worshipped: they lead us onward to the main point of enquiry, the regular recurrence of such periods.

The precise nature of Divine worship in the patriarchal era, and the intervals between its recurrence, have not been expressly revealed. But if oblations and sacrifices are plainly mentioned in the first ages of the world, and the whole tenour of such rites appears to indicate an especial revelation of God, it is surely most reasonable to presume that the Deity should also have defined by revelation the periods for the recurrence of a more especial worship of Himself, of which these oblations and sacrifices formed the ritual portion; and in accordance with this supposition the Scripture does seem to hint at this being every seventh day, though an account of this early revelation has not reached us. When Cain and Abel presented their offerings to the Lord, they were obeying both the dictates of the moral law which God had imprinted in their hearts, and a certain express rule as to the peculiar method of testifying their obedience to those inner dictates. So that if we admit that in one case God was pleased to reveal (though the revelation has not been recorded) the peculiar *method*, it will not be unnatural to suppose that he would also

reveal the particular *time* for the recurrence of such worship; and further, it will not be a matter of surprise if, in the short history of Adam and his sons, no separate and especial mention be made of the revelation.

We shall now proceed from probable inferences to definite notices of Scripture upon the origin of the Sabbath, making from them such deductions as appear demonstrably true, and coincident with the previous course of argument.

The first mention of the Sabbath occurs in Genesis, ch. ii. 2, 3, in which the sacred historian, after a detailed account of the creation, thus concludes:—“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made: and God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.” From this text we learn that on the seventh day God ended His work;—that He rested thereon; and that He sanctified the day because He so rested thereon. But what the nature of this rest was, or in what way God was pleased to *bless* and *sanctify* this day, has not been revealed in Scripture. Some writers have contended that it was by the actual institution of certain duties to be performed by Adam and his sons: others maintain, as confidently, that God by his inward decree destined the day for future and not for present observance. As we might naturally expect, the early writers of the Church have few direct

allusions to this topic. Epiphanius¹, in a short remark, seems to consider that the origin of the Sabbath was known to Adam, but he gives no reasons for his opinion, nor any chain of argument which might lead to it. Among more modern writers, Luther² most unhesitatingly affirms, that even if Adam had remained in a state of innocence, he would still have kept the Sabbath-day holy by teaching his descendants, by returning thanks to God, and by resting from his daily duties. This opinion, however, is both unsupported and wholly at variance with the received tradition, that Adam in his state of innocence had but one law and that a positive law, imposed upon him; which, as Tertullian³ observes, would have been sufficient for him if it had been perfectly kept. Moreover, the supposition of Dr. Lightfoot⁴ is highly probable, that Adam fell on the sixth day, before the institution of the Sabbath; and in defence of this opinion, he cites Psalm XLIX. 12: "Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not:" where the original text reads *Adam* instead of *man*. The ninety-second Psalm is said by the Chaldaic translator to have been sung by Adam, after his fall, upon the Sabbath-day.

These are slender foundations to build an argument upon, but they are still sufficient to show that there is a strong presumption against such a state-

¹ Epiphanius, LI. 97. de Hæres.

² Luther in Genes. ii. (Vol. VI. p. 17. Edit. 1581). "Si Adam in innocentia stetit tamen habuisset septimum diem sacrum," &c.

³ Tertull. Advers. Judæos.

⁴ Sermon on Exod. xx. 11.

ment as that advanced by Luther: for if the worship of God on the seventh day was an antelapsarian law, it would have been moral in the highest sense, and there could be no possibility of raising the slightest question.

The existence of sabbatical institutions shortly after the fall, may be shown with some degree of probability, but no text of Scripture can in any way be wrested to prove that there would have been any before the fall. Even Luther is not consistent with himself; for afterwards, in a letter to a friend¹, he seems to assert positively that no observance of the day was found in the times of the patriarchs, or before Moses. It is necessary at once to endeavour to confute such extreme positions, as they serve only to perpetuate error and controversy, without contributing any real information on the subject. The only possibility of conducting this argument is to closely follow evidence wheresoever it lead, and after this has failed, to accept the guidance of probable inferences. For this purpose we will first examine the principal grounds for depressing the first observance of the seventh day, down to the times of Moses; and if they appear weak and insufficient, or are counterbalanced by superior evidence, we must, in the next place, strive to investigate those positions which are supported by the best evidence, and the highest degree of probability the question admits of.

¹ Luther, Vol. vii. Epist. ad Amicos. "Nam ante Mosen hoc non invenitúr neque de Abraham," &c.

1. The most reasonable argument in favour of a late origin is, that Moses spoke in the second chapter of Genesis *proleptically*, or by anticipation; and that in recording the transactions of the creation, he takes that opportunity of showing the reasonableness of the festival, then lately enjoined on the children of Israel. "Thus," as Archbishop Whately² remarks, "a writer of an account of the Gospel History might notice the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary, and observe that it is now celebrated by Christians under the title of Lady's Day, without meaning to imply that it was instituted at this or that time."

Other passages of Scripture have also been brought forward, in which it would appear that the word *sanctify* does imply to *preordain* a thing for a particular purpose. Thus Isaiah³ speaks of the Medes as *sanctified* by God to be the destroyers of Babylon. So also, "The Father sanctified His Son, and sent Him into the world⁴," ordaining Him to be redeemer of it. Again, in Jeremiah⁵ the same word here translated *sanctified*, is rendered by the term *prepare*: "Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter."

Now the opinion, that these words in Genesis were spoken *proleptically*, may demand our respect from its antiquity; for it is coeval with venerable Bede⁶,

² Archbishop Whately's essay on the Difficulties in St. Paul's Writings. Appendix A.

³ Isaiah xiii. 13.

⁴ St. John x. 36.

⁵ Jerem. xii. 3.

⁶ Bede, *Hexameron*.—"Sanctificavit Deus Sabbatum non actu et re ipsâ sed decreto et destinatione sua."

and has been continually reproduced down to the present time. But it certainly rests upon no probable inference or deduction from the text before us: it seems framed to suit a preconceived position,—that the observance of one day in seven was a Jewish dispensation, and a part of the positive law which God gave to His people.

Nor is it likely that Moses would have used a word which involved the least ambiguity: he would either have plainly stated that God did then predestinate the day, or he would have simply recorded the fact, that God did bless and sanctify the seventh day, without any allusion to the nature of that blessing and sanctification; and as to the literal interpretation of *sanctify*, it may be fairly affirmed, that by far the greater number of passages in which it is used require the simple and natural meaning, *to make holy*.

2. A second argument is raised from the silence of Moses upon this ordinance, until the time of its authoritative promulgation in the wilderness. It is said that surely some slight traces would be found of such an ancient and important rite, either in the lives of the patriarchs or in the covenant between God and Noah, when so ceremonial a point as the abstinence from blood formed the subject of a distinct command. And finally, the great rule of Ambrose of Milan¹ is brought forward, that “credence is not to be given

¹ “Quod nusquam legerim non astruo, nec verum arbitror.” Ambros. Ep. 64.

to that which is not to be met with in any writings." To all this two answers can be made; first, that Holy Scripture is not entirely silent upon this head; and, secondly, that the omission of a fact is not the negation of it. And, first, there are just such few scattered allusions as we should *à priori* expect from the nature of the case. It must always be remembered, that the history of two thousand five hundred years is condensed into a few chapters, and that these are principally confined to a record of events which had influence on the destinies of the patriarchs, from whom the children of Israel were so directly descended. Who then can wonder that amid so many more important accounts, no mention should have been made of a rite, which might reasonably be supposed to require no distinct allusions to verify its ancient institution? And again, if Moses seem to be silent upon this head, it is perfectly possible that such silence was *intentional*. For if in his history of the patriarchs he had left any traces of the ceremonial observances attending upon the Sabbath, or any distinct mention of the degree of rest that was commanded thereon, he would have afforded the most convenient arguments to the rebellious Jews for observing the Sabbath as their own froward wills dictated. They would have quoted the usages of their forefathers, and on such precedents would have evaded commandments which were to admit of no qualification or change. And that there was that feeling is proved by those who went to gather manna before the law was fully

established, and by the man who afterwards perished without mercy for gathering sticks on the seventh day. To use this last example as a proof that the holy day had been only just established (for otherwise the man would never have so sinned), is to assume that the Sabbath was observed previous to the raining down of manna, with all the solemn rites which were added afterwards. For we are not contending for an early origin of the Jewish Sabbath, but of sabbatical institutions generally. Thus, then, from the *shortness of the history*, and the *nature of the case*, only a few scattered notices may be expected.

The first passage is in the third verse of the fourth chapter of Genesis, where it is said, "that in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord." Now in the margin there is another reading, "At the end of the days," which seems to hint at this institution. At the end of what days?—at the end of the days of labour and occupation, when Adam was accustomed to pay his worship to his Creator, and had so taught his sons. Furthermore, the character of Cain seems to confirm the supposition. He would naturally concur with the custom, as with a custom he had been brought up formally to observe. Had it been some singular and especial occasion, rather than a day of regular recurrence, the same spirit that prompted the thankless offering of fruits would have induced him to have utterly refused compliance with the injunction. There is in the account, short as it

is, the consistent behaviour of a man who languidly and carelessly performed duties to which he was bound by habit more than inclination.

The next passage is Genesis viii. 10—12,—“And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came unto him in the evening, and, lo! in her mouth was an olive-leaf pluckt off. So Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days and sent forth the dove; which returned not again to him any more.” There is nothing more in this passage than a distinct mention of a certain act being performed, after a recurrence of seven days. But that act was of a particular and religious nature; it was expressive of hopeful trust in God, and was a direct enquiry made to Him “who had broken up the fountains of the great deep.” Nothing is more probable than the performance of a solemn service to God before such an act, and that the day should be selected upon which such additional devotion was customary. In Job, chap. i. 6, it is said, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord.” This has been considered by many commentators to refer to the weekly Sabbath. Lastly, in the book of Genesis, xxvi. 5, Abraham is commended by God, “because that Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws.” There is not the slightest allusion to the Sabbath, but there is a marked division in the nature

of the different commands which God gave to Abraham. This serves as a reasonable answer to the statement,—that it is not probable that in such an early state of society any definite form of worship would as yet have been appointed. After all these passages we may add the frequent mention of the number *seven*. The seven years of famine,—the seven years of plenty,—the seven years Jacob served Laban for Rachel,—the mention of *a week* in the account of the fraud practised by Laban in that transaction,—the seven days of mourning for Jacob¹,—the celebration of the feast of unleavened bread, together with mention of a holy convocation² on the seventh day,—all seem silently to point to some septenary division of time, which it would be difficult to account for on any other hypothesis than the early institution of a festival recurring every seventh day. It would be unreasonable to expect more than this in the seventy or eighty chapters which comprise the wide space of 2500 years, especially when none of the rites of patriarchal worship, with the exception of circumcision, are mentioned therein; and yet we may infer that they must have been sufficiently precise and uniform, from the brief notice of Melchisedek priest of the most High God, and of Abraham formally assigning to him a tithe of the booty in the king's dale.

The second answer to the objection raised from the silence of Scripture, is founded on the principle alluded to above, that the omission of a fact is not

¹ Gen. l. 10.

² Exod. xii. 16.

the denial of its having taken place. For the same argument might be used to prove that there were no forms of worship at all, and no times dedicated to the service of God; which the natural law proves to be false: for it is accepted as an axiom, that the worship of a God is prescribed by the rule of conscience to every human being. Hence the quotation of Ambrose may be properly used when referred to those newfangled doctrines which are advanced without any warrant of Scripture, rather than to positions like that before us, which certainly have a kind of support from the sacred writings.

3. The third objection against an early origin is formed from two passages, the one out of Nehemiah, the other out of Ezekiel. In the account given by Nehemiah of the solemn fast, and the confession of God's wonders in Egypt, it is said; "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments and true laws, good statutes and commandments; and *madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath*, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant³. Ezekiel has to the same effect as follows: "And I gave them my statutes and shewed them my judgments, which, if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also, I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, that they may know that I am the Lord that sanctify them⁴. These passages would at first sight

³ Neh. ix. 13, 14.

⁴ Ezek. xx. 10—12.

seem to imply that the Sabbath was first given at Mount Sinai; and furthermore, that it was a sign of a covenant between God and his people, as God himself declares in Exodus, xxxi. 16, 17¹: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant." Again, in Isaiah Lvi. 3, 6, the Lord promises blessings unto such as keep the Sabbaths, even though they were eunuchs and aliens: "For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off." Here it is plain that *keeping the Sabbaths* and *taking hold of the covenant* are identical; so that the Jewish doctors spoke not unadvisedly, when they declared the institution of the Sabbath to be the condensation and perfection of the whole law². The principle of a covenant was further maintained in prohibiting the proselytes of the gate from observing this festival; as they would then bear witness to a sign and destination peculiar only to the children of Israel: for it will be observed that the eunuchs and strangers mentioned by Isaiah are manifestly proselytes of righteousness. The evidence tendered by these passages may be briefly

¹ Compare Deut. v. 16.

² See Selden de Jure Naturali et Gentium, Lib. III. c. x.

summed up in the following way : It is manifest that the ceremonial Sabbath, with all its minute ordinances, was first given to the children of Israel, that it was to be hallowed by a complete and unbroken rest, in memory of the cruel taskmasters of Egypt : and furthermore, that it was a sign of God's covenant with his people, as the bow in the cloud was a witness unto Noah.

But this is in no way inconsistent with the existence of a seventh day sanctified and made holy to the Lord, ages before the institution of the Jewish Sabbath. Religious rest—rest from all work, directly and indirectly—was to be thenceforth the distinguishing *mark* of the newly ordained and remodelled day. For it is worthy of observation, that all Jewish rites were attended by an especial act or circumstance which served to convey the meaning of them, and enforce their observance. The feast of unleavened bread, the sacrifice of the paschal lamb, circumcision, the feast of tabernacles, and all the principal rites, were not nakedly enjoined, but were indissolubly connected with some explanatory act. This continued also in the Christian Church : the holy sacrament of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper are examples. Rest, then, was the outward sign of the Sabbath-day being religiously kept, and of the children of Israel rightly performing their part of the covenant with the Lord. For this reason, he who gathered sticks was stoned as a wilful despiser of God's promise ; and they who should venture to bear burdens at the gates of Jeru-

salem were threatened with the judgments and fiery indignation of the Lord of Hosts¹; "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath-day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem; and it shall not be quenched." To this rest Nehemiah and Ezekiel allude in the above-mentioned passages; and such is the explanation given by the oldest commentators. Theodoret, in his commentary upon Ezekiel, notes distinctly that God does not say with regard to the Sabbaths, that a man shall live by them, but speaks of them as involving a rest (*ἀργία*), which was to be a separative sign to the children of Israel. And this, Theodoret observes, did more effectually separate them than even circumcision itself, as the Egyptians and Edomites were said to have partially adopted this latter rite. Again, in his commentary upon Jeremiah, (xvii. 22,) he alludes to *rest* being the especial characteristic of a rightful observance of the Sabbath. Such explanations will enable us to cast aside all arguments against the early origin, which seem to rest upon the Jewish observance of this day. They serve indeed to prove that the fourth commandment especially applied to the Jews, but they do not a whit the more tend to controvert our position,—that a seventh day was kept holy to the Lord, before He was pleased to institute a more strict and peculiar observance.

¹ Jer. xvii. 27.

This distinction will be useful in considering the next objection.

4. The fourth objection is derived from the direct statements of the early Fathers of the Church, that there was no observance of the Sabbath among the patriarchs. This is declared so frequently and so positively, that it will be necessary to review some of these passages separately, and the circumstances under which they were written; as it would be highly presumptuous to turn a deaf ear to authorities which appear to bear so directly upon the subject. Justin Martyr³ speaking of Abraham and the patriarchs says, "that they observed not the Sabbath, but were yet well pleasing to God:" that the "Sabbath was instituted on account of their wickedness and hardness of heart, and was for a sign unto the children of Israel." Irenæus³ affirms that "Abraham without circumcision and observation of the Sabbath believed in God, and that it was accounted to him for righteousness." Tertullian⁴ maintains, that neither Enoch, Noah, or Melchisedech, observed the old Sabbath; and similarly Eusebius⁵ asserts that "Melchisedech, servant of the most High God, was not circumcised

³ Καὶ γὰρ μὴ σαββατισάντες οἱ προωνομασμένοι πάντες δίκαιοι, τῷ θεῷ εὐπρέστησαν.—Dial. cum Tryph. 19.

Καὶ ὅτι διὰ τὰς ἀδικίας καὶ τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν εἰς σημεῖον ὡς προέφην, καὶ τὸ σάββατον ἐντέλται ὁ Θεὸς φυλάσσειν ὑμᾶς.—Ibid. c. 21.

³ "Ipse Abraham sine circumcissione et sine observatione Sabbati, credidit Deo et reputatum est ei ad justitiam."—Irenæus. iv. c. 40.

⁴ Tertull. contra Judæos, cap. 2. 4. 6.

⁵ "Melchisedech servus Dei Altissimi, ... qui neque corpore erat circumciscus, neque quid Sabbatum esset ullo modo edoctus," &c.—Euseb. Demonstratio Evangel. Lib. i. c. 6.

in his body, nor in any way instructed what the Sabbath was." To these passages taken collectively, the same answer may be made;—that they all refer to the Jewish Sabbath only, and have nothing to do with the first origin of sabbatical institutions. This may be proved individually. Justin Martyr is arguing with Trypho who is endeavouring to maintain the excellence of the Jewish rites: on the contrary, Justin Martyr shows that they were but types and shadows of a more glorious dispensation, and that they had now therefore passed away for ever. The very nature of this dialogue proves that it must have been the Jewish Sabbath, with all its binding rites and ceremonial observances, to which Justin Martyr referred. Trypho rests solely upon the law of Moses, he clings to all the circumstances of its worship, with tenacity and fervour. Justin Martyr investigates their origin, and the reasons of their being established: he proves that as before the time of Moses they were not binding, so after the resurrection of Christ they were numbered among the things that are not; for "we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." When he goes on to say, "We would have observed your carnal circumcision, your Sabbaths, and all your festivals, had we not known that they were added because of your lawlessness and stubborn hearts¹," the

¹ Ἡμεῖς γὰρ καὶ ταύτην ἂν τὴν περιτόμην τὴν κατὰ σάρκα, καὶ τὰ σάββατα, καὶ τὰς ἑορτὰς ἀπάσας ἀπλῶς ἐφυλάσσομεν, εἰ μὴ ἐγνώμεν δι' ἣν αἰτίαν καὶ ὑμῖν προσετάγη, τοῦτ' ἐστὶ, διὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ὑμῶν, καὶ τὴν σκληροκαρδίαν.—Dialog. cum Tryph. c. 18.

Perhaps the term *σαββατα* is used in the plural, to imply the three sorts of Sabbaths, of weeks, months, and years.

connection is so palpable, that no reasonable doubt can be entertained but that the sentiment of Justin Martyr is to this effect:—The *ceremonial* Sabbath was not observed by the patriarchs.

The passage from Irenæus admits fully of the same explanation: the whole context shows that he alludes to the Jewish Sabbath; and when we call to mind the tenour of the writings of Irenæus, that they were to disentangle the web of sophistry which was then enmeshing the Church, and that Judaism was the most prominent enemy to the freedom which is under Christ, it is not difficult to admit that all passages adduced from Irenæus upon this head must be referred to the Judaical observance of the day. The simplest answer to the passage from Eusebius, will be the following quotation from the same work. When speaking of Job, he suggests the enquiry, “Had he then any observance of the Sabbath, or any other Judaical will-worship? How could he, when he lived before the times of Moses?” The definition, *Judaical will-worship*, at once points out the way of interpreting his former passage. The same remarks apply to the passages from Tertullian; where it is observable that he studiously uses the word *sabbatizo*, which generally implies a superstitious mode of observing the day. Justin Martyr also uses the Greek form (*σαββαρίζω*) of the same word. To conclude the answer, we shall simply adduce one passage from Chrysostom, which will prove more satis-

² Demonst. Evangelica, Lib. i. c. 24.

factorily than any detailed arguments, that the *animus* of the Fathers is in no way opposed to an early origin. Chrysostom thus explains Genesis ii. 3: "Here from the beginning God intimates to us this doctrine, instructing us to separate and lay aside the first day in the compass of every week for spiritual exercises'."

These quotations have been advanced by the opposite party from a mistaken view of the controversy; which is not, whether the Jewish Sabbath was observed by the patriarchs; but, simply, whether the patriarchs had any sabbatical institutions.

5. The last argument that has been adduced in favour of the first institution having taken place in the wilderness, is from the Talmudists. For a collection of these we are mainly indebted to Selden, in the third book of his "De Jure Naturali et Gentium." It is of course impossible to consider these separately, without a perfect knowledge of the circumstances under which they were written, and an acquaintance with Rabbinical antiquity which rarely falls to the lot of one so young as the writer of this dissertation. Nothing therefore remains, except to state the different authorities brought forward by Selden, and to endeavour to show that they are neutralized by the assertions of writers of equal authority.

The Talmudists place the origin of the Sabbath

¹ Ἦδη ἐντεῦθεν ἐκ προομιῶν αἰνιγματωδῶς διδασκαλίαν ἡμῖν ὁ θεὸς παρέχεται, παιδεύων τὴν μίαν ἡμέραν ἐν κύκλῳ τῆς ἑβδομάδος ἀπάσης ἀνατιθέναι καὶ ἀφορίζειν τῇ τῶν πνευματικῶν ἐργασίᾳ.—Chrysost. in Genes. ii.

at Marah, in the first month after the departure from Egypt. They ground this opinion upon Exodus xv. 25: "There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them." The Gemara of Babylon explains the terms "*a statute and an ordinance*," by the seven precepts of Noah, the observance of the Sabbath, and the tendering due honour to parents. And though authors disagree upon other precepts, Selden expressly states, that the most ancient traditions affirm that the Sabbath was certainly one of them². Hence, in the recapitulation of the decalogue, in the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, the words, "*as the Lord thy God commanded thee*," are peculiarly attached to these two commandments, apparently to specify that they had been separately announced some time previously. The cautionary "remember" prefixed to the fourth commandment, in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, is referred to the same origin. Again, in the Gemara of Babylon, when the extent of a sabbath-day's journey forms the subject of a dispute between two Jewish doctors, Selden observes, that throughout the argument the Sabbath is presupposed to have been given at Marah. So that, according to these authorities, the Sabbath was first observed on the 21st or 22d of Jiar, at Alush, in the wilderness of Sinai, a few days before the giving of the law, which happened at the beginning of Sivan, or the third month. As might be expected,

² Attamen Sabbatum in eis contineri traditio est avita et vetustissima.—Selden de Jure Naturali et Gentium. Lib. III. chap. 9.

they append to these opinions an artificial and fanciful account of the reason of the institution. Philo, in his life of Moses, says, that after the Jews had wearied themselves with an ineffectual search for the birth-day of the world, God at length graciously revealed it to them, and confirmed it by a sign. Hence the declaration in Genesis, that God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath-day, is referred proleptically to the first announcement at Marah.

Such are the authorities adduced by Selden; to which, as has before been said, we can make no other answer than patiently collect contrary opinions from Jewish writers of equal credit. This will wholly set aside the otherwise important assertion, that such a tradition had prevailed *universally* among the Jews. Such an argument would have been of great weight, and difficult to answer. But, fortunately, all cause for perplexity is removed, as an author, whose acquaintance with Hebrew antiquity is almost proverbial, supplies a series of quotations from Jewish writers, which strongly uphold the contrary opinion. These will be found in Dr. Lightfoot's explanation of the memorable passage, S. Matthew xii. 8. From them he not only deduces the fact of an early origin, but even goes so far as to consider that the care of this day lay upon Adam even before the fall. To this last opinion it seems difficult to subscribe, but the very fact of its being deducible from the statements of the Jewish doctors shows most satisfactorily that they were by no means so unanimous as Selden

would seem to imply. Finally, even here also it may be reasonably enquired, whether these Talmudists were so much occupied in investigating the actual antiquity of a seventh day of worship, as the origin of the Sabbath in its character of a day of rest, of ceremonial observance and of distinctive character: as a day which separated them from the heathen nations around them, which week by week declared them to be a chosen people unto the Lord, and was in itself a sign that God had so chosen them. This is certainly the most natural view of the case; it would not have promoted their claims to pre-eminence among the nations, if they could only prove that their forefathers had worshipped God on the seventh day from the oldest times; while the scrupulous and distinctive *rest* on that day must have supplied them with a topic whereon they could most fondly dilate. Had it been enquired whether Abraham and the patriarchs observed a regular cessation from labour upon the seventh day of every week, we should expect their statements of the origin of the day to have closely and especially referred to the very first notice of a weekly period of worship; but when no such enquiry was obtruded upon their minds, it is natural that they should only be interested about the origin of the Sabbath *in the precise way they were then observing it.*

These are the five principal arguments which have been made use of to prove that the Sabbath was first declared in the desert to the children of Israel;

that it was purely ceremonial,—and that thus the Lord's Day depends solely and entirely upon the continued practice of the Christian Church, without any reference to the question, whether a seventh day was or was not dedicated to the worship of God in the very beginning of time. And it would appear that they have been sufficiently answered.

Let us now dismiss the negative arguments, and proceed to state affirmatively the most probable inferences from the foregoing investigations.

First, it would seem that the account of God's resting on the seventh day cannot be claimed as supporting either opinion. It is a mere direct narration that God in six days created the world, and that on the seventh He rested, and that in consequence He hallowed or blessed that day. Nothing more can fairly be extorted from the passage. The next direct mention is two thousand five hundred years afterwards. Now during all this time, though direct evidence be wanting, we have nevertheless constant allusions to a formal worship of God: there are faint indications of sacred persons set apart for conducting it,—either patriarchs, who were priests to their own immediate families, or prophets and preachers of righteousness, as Enoch. There are allusions in the history of Melchisedech to established ordinances for the maintenance of the priests, and the existence of direct laws upon the subject. There was imprinted in the heart of man the great fundamental rule, "thou shalt serve the Lord thy God,"

which must at once have implied that some definite and especial time must have been set apart for the same. Moreover, there was in everything the principle of *recurrence*; the night that succeeded to the day; the trees that put forth their leaves at stated times; the flowers of the field that sprang up, faded, and after a lapse of time returned to their original beauty and vigour,—were all alike practical examples of this invariable law. When all these reflections, weak and inefficient as they are taken singly, are collected into one mass, they carry with them a force of conviction which it is nearly impossible to resist. Even if all other notices failed, there would still be a strong presumption for such an ordinance; but when, in the very first week of the world's being, there appears a notice of this day, when faint gleams of its existence break across the dark silence by which it is environed, and when that silence would appear to be *intentional*, there seems to be the strongest reasons for referring it to a period as early as the first mention of it. Nor is there anything improbable in the supposition, that God made it the subject of a distinct revelation to Adam, as He must have done in the case of sacrifice, though neither one nor the other is recorded. It would have been revealed to Adam as the day which Jehovah had blessed, because upon it He sanctified His labours by rest; it would have been enjoined upon the posterity of Adam, as commemorative of the foundation of the world, and would have served more than anything

else to keep them from idolatry. In a word, without such a day it would seem difficult for the corrupt nature of man to have maintained the true worship of God. If the times of religious service had been frequent, they would, after the lapse of time, have been evaded as irksome; if they had been undefined and optional, the sluggish heart of man would have continually deferred them to a morrow that would never arrive. Special times for service are the very elements of a Church, as upon them special rites are performed, which are the touchstones of adherence to, or departure from, that Church. A seventh day holy to the Lord would have been all *this*: it would have distinguished those who "called upon the name of the Lord," from those with whom "the Lord's Spirit continually strove;" it would have been as a light upon a hill-top, to recall the wandering; it would have strengthened the faith and confirmed the zeal of the sons of righteous Abel. To *nothing* do men cling with such tenacity as to rites and observances: doctrines may be covertly assailed, and men are comparatively passive; but the very first *attempt* to undermine a rite is as a trumpet-call of no uncertain sound, and straightway they make ready for the battle. Whether mankind observed this day on account of God's resting upon it, is another question: it would however seem highly probable that if they did observe it, it would be upon this account: for we may humbly presume, that if God did enjoin the observance of this day to Adam and his children,

He would accompany it with the same reason He afterwards gave to the children of Israel in the decalogue. Although it is highly probable that the *rest* thereon was such only as would best minister to the ends of religion, and not that rigorous cessation from all labour, which was specially to recall the time when the iron entered into the soul of the children of Israel, and "their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all service of the field".

There is yet another point which seems to be dimly alluded to in the first Sabbath that dawned upon the world. It is a mere conjecture, and by no means advanced as any sort of proof, but only as one of the many hints discoverable in the early history of man. There would then seem to be some connection between the first Sabbath and the promise of the Redeemer. We may conceive that, according to the idea of Dr. Lightfoot, man fell upon the sixth day, the very day upon which he had been created. He was then overwhelmed with shame and anguish, dreading the presence of his God, and already feeling the shadows of his coming doom. The Scripture then supplies an account of the sentence which the Lord of Hosts pronounced on the guilty pair. But He was pleased not utterly to destroy them, nor to cut off all hope of their entering into His rest: wherefore He made the gracious promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head."

¹ Exodus i. 14.

To this we may suppose they clung with an energy and earnestness, which we recognize more fully developed in succeeding generations: it was their last hope and stay—the single ray of light across the blackness of darkness which encompassed them. It is not unnatural to suppose that the following or seventh day would have been marked by notable and extraordinary service. They could not fail to have proffered the humblest adoration to God, who had thus redeemed them from the bitter pains of eternal death. The day would have been thus distinguished from other days; and bearing in mind the previous six days, (of which revelation might have informed them when in Paradise,) they would after another six days celebrate the anniversary of that day which brought to them the remembrance of the certainty of their misery, and the consolations of God's promise. Seven days would have been their only epoch of time. Much of this is probably fanciful and untenable; still it is advanced as an amplification of Dr. Lightfoot's theory, and was suggested by the ancient tradition alluded to in this chapter.

But there is a stronger evidence in favour of our opinion than a mere conjecture like the foregoing. Nearly all the nations of the heathen world have possessed some faint and traditionary notices of a septenary division of time. The passages from Linus, Homer, and Hesiod, have been too often quoted, to render it necessary to repeat them here. For it is not so much individual passages, however distinct, that

favour this argument, as the general prevalence of such a tradition. Whence could it have come? if it be traced from the Greeks to the Egyptians, we have another witness to the existence of sabbatical institutions previous to the Exodus: for at no other period would the Egyptians have obtained so perfect a knowledge of the rites and customs of the Jews, as when they enacted the part of taskmasters, and were living in daily contact with them. It cannot be argued that the Egyptians would not have been likely to have paid any attention to the religious rites of a subject people; for an instance is at hand in the case of this selfsame rite, in which the Romans so far noticed the Jewish Sabbath, as to state its probable origin in their historical books¹, and frequently to make mention of it in their poetry and lighter writings; and this too in a way which, to say the very least, seems to imply a general familiarity with the rite. Ovid, Horace, Tibullus, Persius, Juvenal, Lucian, mention it incidentally in their writings as if perfectly well known to all their readers; and if it be remembered that the peculiar worship of all, and particularly of oriental nations, took some root in Rome, there is sufficiently strong proof of a subject nation introducing some of its own observances into a prominent place among those of its conquerors. Either then this sort of tradition crept into the heathen world through the medium of the Egyptians, who themselves became acquainted with it *previous to*

¹ Tacitus. Justin.

the Exodus, or we are left to the other alternative, that it existed in a vague and half-hidden state from time immemorial, as the tradition of the deluge is found in nations among whom it would be difficult to prove any intercommunion. Selden felt so strongly the force of this position, that he has endeavoured to turn the whole body of his arguments against the existence of any *recurrent* festival upon the seventh day: accordingly he has closely sifted the different passages of heathen authors, and the result of the investigation is stated to be this; that these passages may allude to sacred rites being performed on the seventh day of each month, but not continuously on every seventh day afterwards. Clement of Alexandria¹ has a notable passage to this effect: "but the seventh day is acknowledged as sacred not only by the Hebrews, but also by the Greeks." This Selden proves to refer to the septenary division, and not to the sanctity of the day, both from the express words, and from the frequent occurrence of fanciful theories about the seven angels, the seven planets, &c. in the writings of this early father. He also admits that Dio Cassius alludes to the same division, and that the Romans borrowed it from the Egyptians. This is quite enough to render our argument plausible, that the Hebrews originally supplied the Egyptians with the tradition: for it is highly improbable that this division should have arisen solely from the observation of

¹ ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἐβδόμην ἱερὰν, οὐ μόνον οἱ Ἑβραῖοι ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ Ἕλληνες ἴσασιν.—*Stromata* vi.

the planets. Nor is it at all necessary that the seventh day should have been religiously observed; for the very admission that a septenary, though not a recurrent division, was known to the heathen world in very early times, is of great importance, and it cooperates with other evidence to cast back the origin of the Sabbath into the most remote antiquity. When to this we annex the statements of Philo², "that some nations hallowed the seventh day of every month, counting from the new moon," and that the Sabbath was "an universal festival"—when Josephus³ boasts that there was no nation where the custom had not prevailed—when an early father of the Church⁴ alludes to the custom of the nations in dedicating the day of Saturn to ease and luxury;—we have a host of evidence in favour of this weekly division of time, to which it is difficult to resist giving an unfeigned assent. These passages may be of no peculiar force by themselves: they are but the opinions of men who might be mistaken or misled by a prejudice in favour of existing institutions; but when they act as pursuivants to a long train of traditionary evidence, they become invested with a new and important character.

From a review of the various affirmative arguments, the allusions in Scripture, the nature of the case, and the silent voice of antiquity, it seems difficult to doubt the existence of sabbatical institutions before the Exodus; and if this be once granted, it is

² Philo de Vita Mosis, Lib. 11.

³ Josephus c. Apion. Lib. 11.

⁴ Tertullian Apoleget. Chap. 16.

the most natural course to refer it to the first distinct mention in Holy Writ; and this is contemporary with the first week of the world's existence. This opinion at once extinguishes all the differences arising from the fourth commandment being successively claimed as a moral and as a ceremonial precept. The keeping a seventh day holy, is a portion of the great rule of equity, which, as before has been shown, comprises those institutions which belong neither to the moral nor to the ceremonial laws. That some time be dedicated to the solemn worship of God, is essentially *moral*; that one day in seven be so consecrated, is not moral, but very convenient and meet to be observed. But that the day be given up to perfect rest and other ceremonial observances, is not moral, nor convenient to be observed, *except only* by those to whom God especially revealed such a kind of observance.

Thus then it would appear that the origin of the Sabbath is to be referred to the creation; that it was observed by the patriarchs as a day of *praise* to the Lord, and so continued subject to greater or less interruptions, as the nations receded from or approached to the true worship of God; that among the heathen world its traces of divine origin became fainter and fainter, until it merged into a mere human division of time:—but that among the Israelites it was suddenly enforced by fresh revelations; and finally, that the element of *rest* was particularly introduced.

This change will form the subject of the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE OBSERVATION OF THE SABBATH FROM THE EXODUS TO THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

WE now at length leave the uncertain paths of conjecture, and proceed on the sure and beaten way of direct historical evidence. Still all the statements and opinions that accompany the narrative will necessarily take their colouring from the foregoing investigation of the origin, and it will be assumed throughout that a day of religious service was once every week dedicated to the Lord by the patriarchs. While they lived, each household would have recognized in them their spiritual teachers as well as their natural rulers: they, on the other hand, would have felt themselves the depositaries of God's promises, the representatives of a race from whom Shiloh should come, and the appointed instructors of their posterity. Thus under God's gracious guidance both parties would have mutually contributed to a maintenance of the true worship of God; the one by a reverential discharge of the high duties entrusted to them, the other by a loving obedience to their spiritual and temporal ruler. Their wandering life contributed much to this feeling: they were not liable to interference; they had but one

appointed head to whom in times of emergency and difficulty they could apply; they were not exposed to the temptations of idolatry by the nations around them, as they formed a little polity of their own, and carefully separated themselves from the neighbouring tribes with whom they maintained an armed neutrality.—But “ Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation¹,” the children of Israel increased in numbers, and gradually degenerated from the strict and defined forms of patriarchal government. They must have become insensibly more and more inured to Egyptian manners, losing all that simple mode of living to which their forefathers had been accustomed. They were sojourners among a people of great learning, who, from the allusions in Scripture, must have far outstripped all their contemporaries in attractive science and all the arts of civilization. Hence it is not improbable that the stern simplicity of their religion was sullied by intercourse with heathenism, while at the same time storms of political strife were fast overclouding their horizon; for we read that the Egyptians began to fear that the Israelites might become strong enough to dispossess them of the land. Amidst all these counteracting influences, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the observance of the Sabbath-day was either disused, or only carelessly maintained; and after the Egyptians had set over them their taskmasters, and bound their burdens upon them, the opportunities for this service would be more sensibly

¹ Exodus i. 6.

diminished, until at last their distinctive rites would have been swept away by oppression and hard bondage.

But "God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob²." He bore forth his people on eagle's wings, and set their faces toward the land of promise. The four hundred and thirty years had passed away; their bondage was at end; and they were now assuming the character of a mighty nation. Accordingly their religious services received new confirmations and additions, all more or less referring to the mighty deliverance that had been effected by the Lord. The Passover is solemnly instituted, with the reason annexed of God having smitten the Egyptian and spared His people. The day on which they came out of Egypt is hallowed by the decree of God, that all the first-born be sanctified unto Him; and this was to be "a token upon their hands," that the Lord brought them "forth out of Egypt by strength of hand³." The history goes on to say, that at Marah they received fresh ordinances, all of which, we may reasonably conclude, were given for the purpose of restoring their religious worship to its ancient purity. The next revelation appertained to their sabbatical institutions, and is particularly marked and distinct: "And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord, to-day ye shall not find it in the field⁴." The people doubting the words of Moses go forth and find no manna: "And the Lord

² Exod. ii. 24.

³ Exod. xiii. 16.

⁴ Exod. xvi. 25.

said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? see for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath-day; therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

Let us proceed to consider this passage closely. Throughout the account there appear evident traces of its having been known before, and that at no great distance of time. We are confirmed in *this* opinion by Exodus xvi. 4, where the Lord declares unto Moses that He will prove His people by the raining down of manna whether they will walk in His law or no. We have no separate mention of any law previously given, so that we are here thrown back upon conjecture. Now it has appeared highly probable that in Egypt the worship of the true God was much impaired, and that many of their rites and ceremonies had fallen into desuetude. Nothing then is more natural than the fact of a solemn declaration of God's laws having been made anew to His people; and we read that this did take place at Marah. We agree also so far with the Jewish Doctors in thinking it highly probable that the seven precepts of Noah, the observance of the seventh day, and the tendering honour to parents might have formed a part of them, though this would not seem to be their first origin. Manna is sent to the children of Israel, and they are proved and found wanting.

They shew that they did not comprehend the intention of God in raining manna for six days and not on the seventh, and they practically declare that they put no faith in the words of Moses, by going out on the seventh day to gather. They had probably heard the worship of the seventh day recalled to their notice at Marah, and they ought to have inferred from the declaration of a double quantity being sent on the sixth day, that it was to have been spent in religious offices instead of toiling for their daily bread. But they did not understand; and accordingly God expressly forbids them from moving abroad, enjoining a notable and peculiar rest.

The service of the day receives a gradual change: a new element is introduced especially referable to their former bondage in Egypt: it is no longer a seventh day, but a Sabbath-day,—a day of rest. This would prepare their minds for a more defined and circumstantial decree, which was now especially necessary, as the people rested on the seventh day more in compliance with an immediate command, than from perceiving any peculiar fitness in so doing. A few days afterwards the fourth commandment is proclaimed with the greatest solemnity, accompanied with a reason for the resting thereon, drawn from the Divine example. Here it appears in company with the moral laws, but in three chapters afterwards it reappears in the ceremonial laws, (Exodus xxiii. 12) with a fresh reason annexed for its observance,—that reasonable rest might be given to the beasts of bur-

den, the son of the hand-maiden and the stranger. At the end of God's communing with Moses this command is again specially mentioned by itself; it is declared to be a sign between God and the children of Israel, and its observance is enforced by the threat of death to him who should do any work thereon. The same reason is again given for the rest upon this day,—that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day was refreshed. When Moses descends from the mountain his first act is to read the reiterated law upon the observance, announcing the penalty, and showing that the rest did not only pertain to the works of the field or to handicraft, but even to the most ordinary acts of domestic life. Again in Leviticus it is mentioned as a holy festival in company with the Passover, the Pentecost, the feast of trumpets and the feast of tabernacles: to the Sabbath is assigned the first place in the enumeration, with the same brief command of positive rest¹. An instance occurs shortly afterwards, in which a man is found gathering sticks upon the Sabbath: the children of Israel, being in doubt what should be done unto him, put him in ward until the will of the Lord should be known. The sentence of death is decreed against him, and he suffers the same punishment as the blasphemer². Finally, in Deuteronomy, the fourth commandment is again repeated with two reasons annexed, that servants might enjoy rest, and as a remembrance

¹ Lev. xxiii. 6.

² Numb. xv. 32, sq. vide Lev. xxiv. 23.

that the children of Israel had been bondslaves in Egypt. In reviewing these commands we must be sensibly struck with the frequent repetition of this particular law. It is not given once for all as one of the moral code, but is repeated constantly; it is not declared absolutely and independently, but has reasons attached to it to make clear the intention of God. It is frequently introduced with a caution such as, "*remember* that thou keep holy the sabbath;" or, "*verily* my sabbaths ye shall keep³." Both of which words seem intended to call an especial attention to the command, as to one that was not discernible by the light of reason, but depended solely on the positive declaration of God. Again, the rest is to be absolute and entire; it is not merely rest from those labours which might interfere with the religion of the day, but a rest even from the ordinary duties of life. When it is remembered that nearly every rite and ceremony in the Mosaic law was figurative, we may be prepared to find in this peculiar element of the day something of a similar nature. Accordingly this rest was applicable to things past, present, and to come.

To things past, inasmuch as it was a memorial of God's resting from his labours when he had completed the noble fabric of the world. The common benefits of the creation were recalled to the mind, and formed a fitting subject for thankfulness and praise. Again, it was a memorial how the Lord

³ Exod. xxxi. 3.

with a high and out-stretched arm had rescued them from the house of bondage: it was useful in bringing to their mind the great change wrought in their condition, and of stimulating them to acts of thanksgiving for so notable a deliverance. This rest also had a reference to present time, for it was a peculiar note or mark whereby the children of Israel were distinguished from all other nations. Each revolving week could not fail to teach them that truly they were sanctified unto the Lord as a royal priesthood, and a peculiar people. Lastly, this rest was a type of the rest which "yet remained unto the people of God¹," in the same way as the place of that eternal rest was prefigured by the promised land. If to these reasons we annex the peculiar condition of the people, the meaning of the strictness with which it was enjoined is seen at a single view. They had abided long in a place of servile toil, and had so become inured to labours, that it would have been difficult to have suddenly recalled them to the regular duties of public worship, unless they had been influenced by positive threatenings and impressions of terror.

There is yet another point eminently noticeable in the renewed rite of the Sabbath;—that there is no special injunction about the *moral* service of God by prayer. The ceremonial services on the day were sufficiently defined, public convocations were to be held thereon, the daily sacrifice was doubled, meat

¹ Hebr. iv. 9.

offerings were made additionally, but nothing is added of a peculiar portion of the day being assigned to meditation and prayer. It cannot indeed be doubted that public praise and thanksgivings were made to God, and this may be implied in the "holy convocation," for in after times it is well known that the law was studied, and with such singular accuracy, that it was a frequent boast among the Jews that they knew the book of the law as well as their own names. Of this however there is no mention in the books of Moses. It may be that the people were at that time unfitted for any thing except ceremonial observances; their long residence in Egypt in chains and bondage had perhaps degraded their moral character so far, that they needed to be taught the paths unto true holiness by positive institutions. At any rate it cannot be denied that the whole aspect of the Sabbath after the Exodus was positive and ceremonial: it related to the Jews and the Jews only, it was a memorial of their sufferings and deliverance in past times, it was a sign of their separation from heathenism in present times. They had, as Bishop Pearson has observed, two distinct reasons for keeping the Sabbath, explained to them by God.

I. *Special*, to show that they worshipped God who was the Creator of the world—

II. *Individual*, to signify their deliverance from Egypt.

Under the first head they were confined exclusively to the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob: their idolatrous propensities were continually restrained by the weekly observance of a day *entirely* devoted to rest, which rest was the especial acknowledgment that they were the servants of Him who made the heavens and the earth, and rested on the seventh day. The remembrance of the idols of Egypt was so deeply impressed on their minds, that they would never have cast away those "abominations of their eyes" if they had not received some tangible rite to which they could adhere. The moment the strict observance of the Sabbath was suspended, they rushed into all the excesses of idolatrous worship, and were ready to convert that holy festival into a day of heathen revelry and wantonness. There is reason to suppose that while Moses was abiding in the mount with the Lord, they began to turn this sabbatical rest into relaxation and lasciviousness: for when Aaron proclaims a feast to the Lord, (which probably was the weekly Sabbath), we read that it was desecrated with eating, drinking, and profane worship. The words of Ezekiel¹ are to the same effect; "because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths, and their heart went after idols: here "polluting the Sabbath" seems to be the natural prelude to idolatry.

Secondly, the *individual* reasons related more to them in their social position: they were to be merciful and gentle to their servants; they were to give due rest to beasts of burden; remembering under what cruel bondage they had so long languished. In

¹ Ezek. xx. 16..

a similar manner, many of the other ceremonial precepts inculcate mercy and kindness of heart: the dam was not to be taken with the young ones; the ox was not to be muzzled when he trod out the corn. Of all these the rest on the seventh day was as it were a summary and compendium.

Such then were the reasons for the strict injunctions about the Sabbath, as revealed by God Himself; but they were not intended to supersede the graver duties of the law, as they were often wilfully misinterpreted by the Jews. The law was to have been as a schoolmaster to lead them from a mere compulsory obedience to a cheerful and voluntary worship. But it was easier to obey the letter of a ceremonial command than the spirit of it: it was easier to observe a rigorous rest on the Sabbath, than to restrain the promptings of covetousness, the dictates of revenge, and all those evil suggestions which spring up in the unregenerate heart of man. Accordingly, as time went on, we still find them clinging with the same tenacity to their ceremonial observances; and especially to that of the Sabbath, up to the times of the Babylonish Captivity, when a still more perverse and literal adherence is plainly manifest. Michaelis has shown that after their spirit had been broken by captivity, they adopted a more slavish obedience to this principle of rest. In the wars of the Maccabees, a thousand perished on the Sabbath-day without striking a single blow in their own defence, lest thereby they should violate the letter of the law. They knew not that God would have mercy rather

than sacrifice; and that the letter killeth, while the Spirit giveth life. On this head they are reprov'd by Zechariah, who points out how valueless were their fasts and rigorous discipline, if they did not at all "fast unto the Lord¹." They said in their hearts, "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small and the shekel great?" On this account their Sabbaths are rightly called "false" by the early fathers³, as they paid a cold and barren service to God with their lips, while their hearts were far from Him.

But a great and notable change was now at hand: the later prophets continually allude to their neglect of practical duties, and the anger of the Lord against them; "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand⁴." And again, still more plainly, the same prophet declares, that they had caused many "to stumble at the law," and "had corrupted the covenant of Levi." All these are presages of a total change in the ceremonial law, and as it has been indisputably shown that the Jewish Sabbath was essentially ceremonial, we shall be prepared to expect a corresponding change in the observation of this day. This change will form the subject of the following Chapter.

¹ Zechariah vii. 5.

² Amos viii. 5.

³ ἀλλώς τε (χρῆναι γὰρ ὑπολαμβάνω καὶ τε τῶν ἀναγκαιοτέρων ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰπεῖν) ψευδῇ Σάββατα τὰ παρὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις.

Cyril Alex. on Amos vi. 3.

⁴ Malachi i. 10.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ABROGATION OF THE JEWISH SABBATH.

THE period for a change in the ceremonial observances had now fully arrived. The Jews, in losing their freedom, had lost the knowledge of serving God in spirit and in truth. They multiplied their sacrifices, but the Lord rejected them: they "made broad their phylacteries," but they understood not the meaning of the sacred words which were written thereon. As they receded from truth they approached nearer to traditions, and to all the minute circumstances of ceremonial observance; and even these they perverted, in order to serve the ends of avarice and fraud. They neglected the solemn command of honouring and cherishing parents by a pretended offering to the temple, and made a commandment of God, a dictate of the great law of conscience, of none effect by their traditions. There was in every ceremony a minuteness and unnatural rigour which most surely announced that the period of its dissolution was near; for there is no more certain mark of coming change or abrogation in any institution, whether civil or ecclesiastical, than a forced and unhealthy vitality. In our own nation, at no period was Romanism more attractive than when it was about to pass away. Its out-

ward embellishments surpassed those of former times in splendour and magnificence: "the outside of the cup was clean, but inwardly it was full of ravening and wickedness." It was even so with the Jews; their temple worship was imposing, their courses of priests were numerous, but they taught instead of the commandments of God the doctrines of men, and their judgment was set. All the later prophets, as we have shown above, censured this lip-service, and pointed forwards to a time when God should be worshipped in spirit and truth. Even the very Jews themselves foresaw that the shadows of a new dispensation were falling over them, though, in their ignorance and blindness, they referred them to the glories of a temporal kingdom.

We are thus *à priori* prepared for a great change; and when the passages from the prophetic writers are recalled to mind, in which the *spiritual* nature of the kingdom of Christ is revealed, no reasonable mind could fail to foresee that type must give way to antitype, and shadows to substance. Even without the express declarations in the New Testament, the very nature of the case would have suggested that all ceremonial rites must be either altered or abrogated, when that new dispensation, to which they darkly alluded, was fully come. Again, if the brief existence of the Jewish polity after the birth of Christ be called to mind, there would seem to have been ground for a strong presumption in the early Church that all Jewish ceremonies had expired

with the nation ; and there would have been no doubt that the Sabbath had fallen with the race for whom it was designed. For our very reason teaches us, that if a law be especially imposed upon a certain state or community of people, when that community is dissolved, the law ceases to be binding, as it has no subjects over whom it can exercise its authority. And it can only become binding upon any other people by a solemn and defined transfer. If then it can be proved that there was no transfer of the fourth commandment from the Mosaic to the Christian code, it would appear, from *the nature of the case*, that all the ceremonial portions of this law were abrogated : the moral part (that all men devote some time to the worship of God) remaining necessarily unchanged.

Now there is not the slightest allusion to any transfer being made either by Divine ordinance or by apostolic practice. For first, there is not a single text in which our Lord can be supposed to hint at the Jewish worship of the seventh day being transferred to the Christian Church. On the contrary, as we shall proceed to show in the course of the argument, the whole tenour of Christ's teaching leads to the opposite opinion. And secondly, there are no apostolical precepts which allude, directly or indirectly, to such a transfer. The Lord's Day is so slightly noticed, that if we had no other evidence it would have been impossible to safely infer that it was strictly for religious purposes. If however this day had been

derived from the Jewish Sabbath, what careful precepts would have been handed down to us; how strict would have been the instructions to Jewish converts; how copious and explanatory to the Gentile. We should have expected a decree in the first council of Jerusalem, which treated so expressly upon the collision of the Judaist and the Christian. But there is a profound silence upon this subject in the apostolical writings; and a silence that cannot possibly be claimed as *intentional*, for whenever the Sabbath is mentioned by the apostles, it is as a rite which was in no way binding on the early converts. Lastly, there was no such transfer made in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, for both the Lord's Day and the Sabbath were observed by the Church.

There is no ground then for supposing that any transfer was made: wherefore it appears from the nature of the case, that the Jewish Sabbath, which has been already proved to be a part of the ceremonial law, shared the fate of that law, and was utterly abolished. For as Archbishop Whately¹ has well observed, "the rightful authority of any code *generally*, and the obligation of any *particular* precept are two points which mutually prove each other. Not only therefore if the law is binding, the Sabbath is to be kept, but *vice versâ*." Now it has been shown that the ceremonial law was abolished, and it has been farther proved that the Sabbath was not transferred

¹ Essay on the Difficulties in the Writings of Saint Paul. Appendix A.

into the Christian ritual : it remains then that it was abrogated.

If to these arguments from the nature of the case we add certain passages of Scripture which seem distinctly to assert this abrogation, we shall have the strongest proof of this position that can exist. First, we shall consider certain positive declarations of our Saviour, that "He was Lord of the Sabbath," and as such, claimed a power of dispensing with its obligations in the case of His followers. In the twelfth chapter of S. Mathew, our Saviour justifies the conduct of His disciples for plucking the ears of corn by the instance of David's eating the shew-bread, and by the priests profaning the Sabbath by necessary works in the temple ; after which He adds, "But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple ; but if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day²." Nearly the same words recur in S. Mark³, and in S. Luke⁴. This coincidence of expression in the three Evangelists is somewhat remarkable, and would seem to imply that the words had sunk deep into the minds of those who heard them ; and that the Evangelists had been careful to record our Lord's sayings on this subject in the exact way in which He had uttered them. Archbishop Whately has commented upon this passage with great accuracy and sagacity.

² S. Matt. xii. 6. sq.

³ S. Mark ii. 28.

⁴ S. Luke vi. 5.

He says that our Saviour did not so much wish to rebuke the scrupulosity of the Pharisee, as to state fully and determinately His power to abolish the ordinance, otherwise He would never have claimed the title of "Lord of the Sabbath." He displays this power in a very marked and instructive way; for first He tacitly assumes, that the act was contrary to the written law: secondly, that He had a power, equal to the priest, of dispensing with it: thirdly, that He assumed *more* authority, for here there was no need, as in the case of David and his followers. These remarks place the transaction in a very clear view: it must be evident that Christ intended to signify that the time had arrived when the ceremonial Sabbath, in common with other rites, was to be done away with. There is no restrictive sentence, no limitation: it is at once stated that the letter of the law is violated, but that He who sanctioned that violation was Lord of the Sabbath.

Again, when Christ healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, it is said, "that the Jews did persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath-day¹." Upon which our Saviour makes this notable answer to the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The meaning seems to be this: "My Father conducts all the courses of seasons, He sustains and brings to perfection all His works without observing weekly interruptions; even so I perform works of

¹ S. John v. 17.

charity and mercy independent of any observation of times. But besides this explanation there is another fact which deserves attention: our Lord not only heals the impotent man upon this day, which would not have been opposed so violently to the Jewish prejudices as acts of positive manual labour, but commands the man to carry his bed. And we find that the Jews on this occasion did not advert to the cure being performed on the Sabbath-day, as in other instances, but straightway forbad the man from carrying his bed, which was a most overt act against the rest of the day. The only possible explanation is simply this: that our Lord intended not only to claim the power of doing works of mercy on the Sabbath, but of commanding the performance of acts of labour directly forbidden by the Mosaic law. Christ also heals on the Sabbath a woman bowed with infirmity², and a man with a withered hand³: these instances are more remarkable as they were diseases of long standing, whose cure, if He had so willed it, might have been easily put off till the morrow. They were not cases like those possessed of devils, in which every hour brought its convulsions and bodily suffering, but were probably unaccompanied with positive pain, so as to have fully admitted a delay of a few hours. Hence we may infer that the cures were performed with an especial reference to the sinful scruples of the Pharisees: they saw a cure performed on the Sabbath, when the disease

² S. Luke xiii. 13.³ S. Luke vi. 8.

was of a nature which did not positively require so immediate an attendance. Again, in the sermon on the mount all the great precepts of the law are noticed and receive higher sanctions; but of the Sabbath no mention whatever is made. This omission would not be of much importance, if these other examples did not render it in the highest degree probable that the command was, in common with the ceremonial law, antiquated, decayed, and ready to pass away.

The passages cited by the opposite party are so few, and so weak, that it will be sufficient to briefly notice one that has been most frequently used. It is said that if this precept had been really ceremonial, our Saviour would never have bid his hearers pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath¹. Chrysostom probably felt some difficulty in this passage, as in his Homilies upon the Gospel of S. Matthew he expounds the speech of our Saviour as not made to the Apostles but to the Jews². There is however no need for such an explanation: for though all ceremonial observances virtually ceased when our Saviour came into the world, they were not actually abolished till the destruction of the temple; till which time and even afterwards, the Apostles, being of Jewish origin, observed the *religion* of the Sabbath, though they did not comply with the superstitious rest, so that it could not but prove an in-

¹ S. Matt. xxiv. 20.

² 'Ορᾶς ὅτι πρὸς Ἰουδαίους ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐ γὰρ δὴ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἐμέλλον σάββατον τηρεῖν.—Chrysost. in S. Matth.

convenient time for a sudden flight. We shall now proceed to the writings of S. Paul.

S. Paul³ after exhorting his Colossian converts to beware of traditions and the rudiments of the world, thus proceeds: "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath-day, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ." This text is at once conclusive, and has been thought so explicit and precise, that Augustine used it in his controversy with Faustus as an irrefragable argument. "Answer," said he, "the Apostle, if thou art able, who testifies that the rest on that day was a shadow of that which was to come." Again, the Apostle rebukes the Galatians "for observing days, and months, and times, and years⁴." When the strong tendencies of the Galatians to Judaize are recalled to mind, it will seem probable that the Sabbath forms one of the days which this Church superstitiously observed. If we pursue our researches farther, we shall find in the early fathers the same unvarying opinion about the abrogation of the Sabbath. It is needless to multiply quotations upon a point so generally received; but the following passage from Athanasius applies so directly to the question, that we cannot forbear adducing it: "the old Sabbath," he says, "belonged to the rudiments of the law: when then the great Master came and

³ Coloss. ii. 16.

⁴ Gal. iv. 10.

fulfilled all that was foreshadowed by it, it ceased, as a candle fades at the rising of the sun¹."

We shall investigate the reasons for retaining religious worship on the Sabbath in the next chapter: for the present it will appear that this day was abrogated: first, from the nature of the case and the tenour of prophecy: secondly, from the express words of our Saviour: thirdly, from the writings of S. Paul: and lastly, from the universal consent of the Catholic Church. It is simply a case of decision between the Law and the Gospel: if the Jewish Sabbath be in any way considered binding now, it is tantamount to an admission that we are yet under the Law. Nothing can be more dangerous than to call into the support of the Lord's Day the institution of the Sabbath; for if it be asserted that the ancient Sabbath was moral, and that the fourth command is absolutely binding upon all mankind *in its literal sense*, then the Church of Christ must have been guilty of a presumptuous error for eighteen centuries in keeping its weekly festival on the first instead of the seventh day of the week, and of wilfully neglecting all those definite ordinances which are attached to the day in the books of Moses: he that offends in one point offends in all. Much error on this

¹ ἐλθόντος τοῦ διδασκάλου κατηργήθη ὁ παιδάγωγος καὶ ἡλίου ἀνατείλαντος ὁ λύχνος ἐπάνσατο.—de Semente. Cap. 1: it is proper to state that it is a question whether this Homily be rightly ascribed to Athanasius: at any rate it is of that age.

head has arisen from a desire to confirm an ordinance of the Church, such as the Lord's Day is, by Divine authority; as if the Apostles had not been entrusted with powers of binding and loosing upon earth. There is no middle course to be pursued: fallacies, however praiseworthy their intention may be, must at once be smitten down: either the Sabbath must be considered as abrogated with all the other ceremonies of the Law; or the Sabbath must be kept on the seventh day, and the Lord's Day on the first; a proceeding for which there is no warrant, unless it can be proved that the institution of the Sabbath is absolutely and simply moral; and this, we trow, cannot be done.

At present the case stands thus: it would appear that before the Exodus, for the sake of maintaining the true religion, there was a seventh day kept holy; that after the Exodus this day was altered by ceremonial additions and converted into the Sabbath; that after the birth of Christ this day was wholly abrogated, the necessity of worshipping God at some time still remaining, and there being a conveniency in one day out of seven from the custom of four thousand years.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE OBLIGATION AND HISTORY OF THE LORD'S DAY,
FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES DOWN TO THE PRESENT
DAY, WITH ALLUSIONS TO THE INFLUENCE IT EXER-
CISED ON CHRISTIANS.

THE ceremonial law was now declared void: its ordinances were nailed to the cross of Christ, and entombed with Him. Instead of the law of Moses, the law of "one more worthy of glory than Moses"¹ was now being promulgated to the world by the apostles. The Levitical priesthood was dissolved, its use was gone when a Priest arose, not after the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedech. The daily sacrifices, the difference of meats and drinks, the divers washings and carnal ordinances, could not take away sin, for then they would have ceased to have been offered. But when He came, whose blood cleanseth us from all sin, then that which was imperfect ceased, as the stars die away before the rising sun. The Jewish Sabbath will no longer claim the slightest notice; but as we know, from the records of the early Church, that the Christians did observe the seventh day for some centuries after the death of Christ, we shall make a few prefatory remarks on this head; as it

¹ Hebr. iii. 3.

would appear strange that the Sabbath should reappear after it had been formally abolished.

It is true that the old Sabbath had died with Christ; yet, as it has been quaintly said upon this subject, "a time was allowed for its decent funeral²." And it is unnatural to suppose that it could at once have been disregarded; for the apostles were men of Jewish origin, and had been so strongly imbued with a reverence for the religious observances of their country, that they were not likely to have suddenly cast them aside. Moreover they had the example of their blessed Master, who complied with all the ceremonial observances of the time, although at the same time He declared that all these things were on the point of dissolution. It was then highly probable that the apostles would continue to observe certain rites, such as the Sabbath, the Passover, and the Pentecost, detracting from them all that was purely ceremonial and superadding observances of their own, commemorative of the great epochs in the Christian religion. For this reason "S. Paul hastened if it were possible for him to be at Jerusalem on the feast of the Pentecost³." He was anxious, in company with the disciples in Jerusalem, to celebrate a festival which they would regard not only as a solemn usage of their country, but as the anniversary of the descent of those gifts of the Spirit whereby they were enabled to preach the Gospel unto all nations

² Bp. White on the Sabbath, second edit. p. 69.

³ Acts xx. 16.

and tongues. Again, the very principle upon which S. Paul acted, of becoming as a Jew unto the Jews, would prescribe the necessity of complying with the religious part of their ceremonies. The Jewish converts would have embraced Christianity, without at all perceiving that the Mosaic law was now fulfilled by Christ, and consequently no longer binding: they would have still duly performed all the duties prescribed by the law, not so much from a clinging to Judaical rites in opposition to those of Christianity, as from an ignorance of the great change which had been effected. This is proved by the calm and earnest way in which S. Paul reasons with them in his Epistle: while to the Galatians, who could not plead an education in such rites, he addresses the language of sharp reproof. This principle will account for many apparent discrepancies: S. Paul withstood S. Peter to the face, because he sought to compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews, at the same time he circumcised Timothy, though he was of Jewish descent on the mother's side only. And this was done especially "*because of the Jews*" which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek¹. The whole account is but an exemplification of the Divine command, "be ye wise as serpents, but harmless as doves."

¹ Acts xvi. 3. Cf. Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. c. 5. et Tertull. de Præscript. Hæreticorum. "Adeo pro temporibus et causis et personis quædam reprehendebant, in quæ et ipsi æque pro temporibus et causis et personis committebant. Quem ad modum si et Petrus reprehenderet Paulum, quod prohibens circumcisionem, circumcidit ipse Timotheum." Cap. 24.

From all these considerations it will not appear strange that the seventh day should have been retained holy unto the Lord. And such we positively find was the case: the early fathers observed the Sabbath, in compliance with the prevailing Jewish custom, as well as the Lord's Day: but it must be particularly observed, that there is not the slightest reason for supposing that the day was dedicated to rest; in fact, every passage upon the subject tends to prove the contrary; viz. that they gladly took opportunity to celebrate the *religion*, but not the *rest* of the day. "It is permitted us," says Athanasius², "to work and labour on the Sabbath-day, since we are a royal priesthood." It is plain then that the Sabbath was not observed Judaically, and that there were sound reasons for its being thus retained: the reasons for its being maintained as a festival rather than as a fast in the Eastern Churches, will be discussed in its proper place. For the present it will be sufficient to have shown that there was nothing unnatural or inconsistent in the apostles and early Christians retaining the Sabbath in the manner above-mentioned.

We now at once proceed to the first accounts delivered in Scripture concerning the origin of the Lord's Day, and proceed to carry on its history down to the present times. The contemporaneous existence of the Sabbath or Saturday as a holy day in the Church will be similarly noticed, until the time in which it fell into desuetude.

² Athanas. de Semente. Cap. 13.

The first mention of the Lord's Day, or first day of the week, is S. John xx. 19: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." The assembly of the disciples upon this day seems to have been, according to the words of Bishop Pearson¹, "accidentally, or rather providentially, than through any intention of their own." The week after however, it is highly probable, that they met voluntarily, in consequence of a hope that the Lord would again visit them, or it may be, of an intimation to that effect vouchsafed at the former meeting. This intimation would have been by no means unreasonable, for it is recorded by S. Matthew², that the disciples were appointed to meet our Lord on a certain mountain in Galilee, although no express mention is made of the words of our Lord on that occasion. Again, when the day of the Pentecost, which was the first day of the week, was fully come, the disciples are described as being all *with one accord* in one place. This phraseology seems to imply a fixed arrangement among the disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles³ mention is made of the first day of the week in such distinct terms, that there can be little doubt it had now become a festival fully recognized by the Church. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread,

¹ Exposition of the Creed. Art. v.

² S. Matt. xxviii.

³ Acts xx. 7.

Paul preached unto them." When it is remembered that this took place at a city far distant from Jerusalem, and that it also seems to bear the stamp of an institution of some standing at that place, it will be difficult to account for it on any other hypothesis, than that of a regular established day of worship, sanctioned by the usage of the apostles. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians⁴, S. Paul bids them "to make a collection for the saints upon the first day of the week." Lastly, in the Revelation of S. John⁵, it is said, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." From this last passage nothing could have been precisely inferred, had not a contemporary writer pointedly affirmed that the Lord Jesus was worshipped on the first day. The statement is made by S. Barnabas; and though some doubts have been raised as to the genuineness of the Epistle, there seem to be none as to its being written in the apostolic age. There is an obscure allusion in it to the destruction of Jerusalem; but then S. Barnabas might easily have lived to be eighty years old. The passage deserves minute attention. "On which account (*i. e.* the Jewish Sabbath's invalidity) we spend the eighth day in festivity, upon which also Christ rose from the dead, and being manifested, ascended into heaven⁶." The former part of the chapter is singular, and difficult to be understood. S. Barnabas compares the six days of God's labour with the six thousand years the world shall endure, citing the text, "for a thousand years

⁴ 1 Cor. xvi. 2.⁵ Rev. i. 10.⁶ S. Barnabas, cap. xv.

with God is as one day." He considers the seventh day as typical of Christ's reign with his saints, and the eighth day as symbolical of the eternal rest in heaven. With all this we have nothing to do; the application may be fanciful, but it does not detract from the credit due to the concluding part: on the contrary, the incidental mention is more valuable. For, in a work of doubtful authority, entitled the "Constitutions of the Apostles," (to which we may afterwards allude,) the Lord's Day is mentioned with the greatest minuteness, and its services most precisely defined.

In the second century, as might naturally be expected, the notices of the day are more frequent: it was now becoming a constituent part of the Christian worship, and was hallowed by certain ceremonies, which here first make their appearance. It was no longer called the "first day of the week," but the "Lord's Day," as implying the nature of the religious service. This name seems to have been introduced late in the first century; after which time it came to be the regular appellation. Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth¹ writes to Soter, "We kept the *Lord's Day* as a holy day;" and Melito, Bishop of Sardis, is said to have written a book concerning the "*Lord's Day*."² Justin Martyr³, in his noted passage upon the observ-

¹ Dionysius apud Eusebium, Lib. iv. c. 26. τὴν κυριακὴν ἁγίαν ἡμέραν διηγαγόμεν.

² Melito *ib.* περὶ Κυριακῆς.

³ Justin Martyr, Apolog. ii. καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἡλίου ἡμέρᾳ πάντων κατὰ πόλεις ἢ ἀγροὺς μερόντων ἐπὶ το αὐτῷ συνέλευσις γίνεται. κ. τ. λ.

ance of this day, uses the term *Sunday*; he writes to this effect, "On the day that is called Sunday there is an assembly of all those who abide in the fields, or in the cities, and the narratives of the apostles are read and the writings of the prophets." Again, he states the reason of this meeting together to be, the celebration of that day, "on which God separated light from darkness, and on which also Our Saviour rose again from the dead." The first, as Bishop Taylor observes, seems rather an excuse, than a reason; the legitimate purpose of the day being the celebration of Christ's resurrection. It is remarkable however that Gaudentius⁴, Bishop of Brescia, who lived in the fourth century, alludes to the same thing. The true account is probably this, that the origin of the Sabbath was the commemoration of Our Saviour's resurrection, to which they fancifully annexed this other reason, for the sake of making it refer to the creation analogously with the Sabbath. It does not however seem to have been an universally-received reason, as certainly it does not occupy a prominent place in the early fathers: whilst they are copious in references to the second reason.

In Tertullian there are frequent allusions to the day: he calls it a festival⁵; and recommends its

Ιβ. τὴν δὲ τοῦ ἡλίου ἡμέρα κοινῇ πάντες τὴν συνέλευσιν ποιούμεθα· ἐπεὶ πρώτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἡμέρα ἐν ᾗ ὁ Θεὸς τὸ σκότος καὶ τὴν ὕλην τρέψας κόσμον ἐποίησε. κ. τ. λ.

⁴ Et die dominicâ quæ dicitur prima Sabbati, in quâ sumserat exordium resurrexit. Gaudentius, 945. F.

⁵ Tertull. Apol. 11. Cap. 16. "Æque si diem solis lætitiæ indulgemus, aliâ longe ratione quam religione solis.

observance in times of persecution, "after the *manner of the Apostles* who were protected by their faith¹." From the first of these passages we deduce that a fast was considered unlawful in the times of Tertullian: a fact that is confirmed by the writings of all succeeding fathers. Again, the second quotation shows the great estimation in which the festival was held at this early period, if, in spite of persecutions of the most cruel kinds, its celebration was so earnestly enjoined. A church with all its worshippers was burnt down by a heathen judge in Phrygia, but still the Christians are bidden to follow the apostolic example, and not to cease from the observance of that holy day.

The two following passages from the same writer require a separate consideration, as they relate to a custom which prevailed for some time in the Christian Church, and then unaccountably ceased. As the custom is intimately connected with the subject before us, a brief discussion will not be inappropriate. "On the Lord's Day," says Tertullian, "we consider it unlawful to fast or to *worship on our knees*²." Again, he complains of those who introduce a disagreement into the Church of Christ by abstaining from kneeling on the Sabbath; "for we," he proceeds, "even as we have received the com-

¹ De Fuga. 7. Quomodo Dominica solemnia celebrabimus? utique quomodo et Apostoli, fide non pecuniâ tute.

² Coron. Militis. cap. 3. Die dominico jejunium nefas ducimus vel de geniculis adoræ.

mand, *on the Lord's Day alone* ought to abstain, not only from this, but every other posture of anxious care, putting off worldly business lest we give place to the devil³. This is the earliest notice we have of this ancient custom⁴: for the work entitled "*Quæstiones et Responsa*," in which there is particular mention of this custom, is undoubtedly not the production of Justin Martyr, but must be placed as late as the fourth or fifth centuries. It is however useful, as it states the meaning of kneeling upon six days to be our fall by sin; and the abstaining from this posture on the Lord's Day to be symbolical of our recovery⁵. Mention is again made of this custom in the twentieth canon of the Nicene Council, where it is expressly declared, "that since there are some who bend the knee on the Lord's Day, it seemed good to the holy council to decree that on that day men offer their prayers standing." It ought to be observed that in some copies this canon is omitted, but apparently upon no foundation; for Quesnel's assertion that it was not entirely received by the Roman Church has been plainly confuted. The rite is noticed consecutively by Epiphanius, Jerome, Augustine: it forms the subject of a canon in the fourth Council of Carthage and the sixth Council of Constantinople: and is again enforced by

³ De Orat. cap. 23. Nos vero sicut accepimus, solo die dominico, non ab isto tantum sed omni anxietatis habitu et officio cavere debemus, &c.

⁴ See however Clem. Alex. Stromata 854, who seems to allude also to the custom.

⁵ Quæst. et Resp. 115.

the third Council of Tours¹. This is the last allusion to the custom I have as yet been able to find. All these accounts serve to prove that the Lord's Day was especially set apart for a commemoration of His resurrection, and the benefits derived from this source; and that thus it could not be said to have succeeded into the place of the Sabbath, as it was instituted for purposes entirely different.

Let us now pause awhile, and endeavour to make some deductions from the accounts thus handed down, as the rites and ceremonies of the first and second centuries claim a greater degree of attention from their being so freshly drawn from the well-head of truth. It would appear from the passages adduced from the New Testament, that the Lord's Day was not a direct ordinance of the Apostles; for nowhere is there the faintest hint of such a decree; and it was not likely that the Apostles, who had just escaped a burden of ceremonies which neither they nor their fathers could bear, would seek to impose any other ordinances upon their followers, than such as would lead to a godly life, and were for the edification of the universal Church. Socrates states, "that it was not the intention of the holy Apostles to make laws for holy-days, but to be authors unto the people of leading a godly and virtuous life²."

¹ Epiphanius. Expos. Fid. 22. 24. August. Ep. 119. Hieron. Dialog. contr. Lucif. cap. 4. 4 Concil. Carthag. canon 18. A.D. 399. 6 Concil. Constant. canon 90. A.D. 680. 3 Concil. Tours, canon 37. A.D. 813.

² Socrates, Lib. v. c. 21.

This very subject is cited by Lardner as an evidence against the claim of the "Constitutions" to an Apostolic origin: the definitions and commands being throughout minute and circumstantial, and savouring more of the fourth or fifth century than of early times. The Apostles had far weightier matters at stake; they had not only to found churches, but to maintain them in the principles of the religion they had received. Nothing could have been more difficult: if their converts were of Gentile origin they were ever swerving back towards the pomp, the scenic exhibitions, and the pageantry of their former religion. If of Jewish extraction, they could not wholly give up the Mosaic ritual, but clung to earthly shadows while a dayspring on high was overshadowing them. Perils, persecutions, sufferings, and all the bitterness of a daily death were the lot of these holy men, in addition to their spiritual cares. They could have no leisure for propounding ordinances, save this only, that their converts should "believe in the Lord Jesus, and in Him crucified."

What then was the origin of the Lord's Day? we hesitate not to say it was Divine, not so much by direct command, as mediately by the sanction of the Divine presence *twice recorded* on that day,—by the gifts of the Holy Spirit thereon,—by the overwhelming addition of three thousand souls to the Church in the earliest state of its existence. In all this there is something more than an ecclesiastical command, though that would have been perfectly

sufficient to have made the observance of the day binding upon all men ; for, as it has been well said, whatever agrees with apostolic usage must be set down as irrefragably true, being received by the Apostles from Christ, and by Him from God¹. In a word, it stands upon grounds not dissimilar to those whereon the Patriarchal Sabbath rests, though its immediate sanctions are as much higher as the full splendour of the Gospel dispensation is brighter than the twilight of Patriarchal worship. It is a portion of what we have before termed, *the great rule of equity*, or that kind of *Jus divinum positivum* alluded to by Bishop Sanderson and defined in the introduction. It fully answers the four criteria in having, first a foundation of equity either in the law of nature or by virtue of Divine institutions : secondly, in having an analogy with a particular rite given to the Jews : thirdly, in having some probable insinuations in the Scriptures ; and lastly, in the continued practice of the Christian Church. There is also a high probability that it was providentially arranged to recur once every week, as agreeing with the natural conveniency of apportioning one seventh part of our time to the service of God. This seems to be the most probable account of the origin and obligation of this great festival. "By keeping a Sabbath," says Bishop Horsley², "we acknowledge a God, by keeping one day in seven, we declare we worship that God who made heaven and earth ; and by keeping it on

¹ Tertullian de Præscript. c. 21.

² Sermon xxi.

the first day, we acknowledge that we are not Judaists, and our belief in that God who raised Christ from the dead. 'The observation of Sunday is a public assertion of the two great articles of our belief, I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His Son our Lord.'" Though we are not disposed to agree with all the other positions of this author, we consider this statement very complete and satisfactory.

Let us continue our enquiry into some other elements of this day, as discernible from the writings of the first two centuries.

1. The *rest* of the day. From the origin we have assigned to this festival, we should imagine *à priori* that all the ceremonial rest of Judaism would be entirely abolished. And this we are distinctly informed by Ignatius³ was the case. The Lord's Day was a practical protest against Judaism. Again, it would seem natural that such rest should be observed on the day, as would best minister to the ends of religion, being as far removed from superstitious ease as from labours that called man away from the service of his God. And that such was actually the case seems to be proved by this same father, and by the quotation we have adduced from Tertullian, where he recommends his readers to put off worldly business, *lest they give place to the devil*. The early Christians were to abstain from worldly cares, that they might thereby avoid mental solici-

³ Ignatius ad Magnes. § 1x. x.

tude about the perishable things of this world, and be enabled to pursue their higher duties with vigour and alacrity. The Corinthian converts are censured for going to law, as weakening brotherly unity, and especially for going before unbelievers, who we know, from the testimony of Eusebius, kept their court-days on the first day of the week. Such was the true spiritual *rest* enjoined by the fathers of the primitive Church.

2. The *festivity* of the day. It has been before observed that it was considered a positive sin to fast upon the Lord's Day. "He is a slayer of Christ," says the author of an epistle ascribed to Ignatius, "who fasts upon the Lord's Day¹;" nay, even the rigid sect of the Montanists so far gave up their prejudices, as in this instance to join with the whole Catholic Church in Christian Festivity. The early Christians seem to have celebrated these feasts under the name of Agapæ, or Love-feasts. They are alluded to by S. Jude in his Catholic Epistle; and probably by S. Paul, when he rebukes the Corinthians for their desecration of the Lord's Supper. Their object was to administer help and comfort to the poor, and to bind all men together more closely in times of danger and affliction. Tertullian² has described one of these, and from his account, coupled with the express command of S. Paul, we may conclude that contributions were certainly made at them for the

¹ Epist. ad Philipp. c. 13.

² Apolog. c. 39. See also Justin Martyr, Apolog. 11.

poorer brethren. Such was the *Bounty* of the ancient Church.

When to these two elements of the day we add, the religious services to God,—“the supplications and prayers for all men³,”—the reading of the prophetic writings and the records of the Apostles⁴,—the solemn exhortations by preaching⁵,—the administration of the holy Eucharist,—the open censure of those who had neglected the services of the Church⁶: the Lord's Day at length appears comprehending, in the fullest and most perfect way, those three great elements of a Christian festival, Praise, Bounty, Rest⁷. Praise as a duty to which the law of nature exhorts all men; Bounty, as a mark of thankfulness to God for his manifold mercies; Rest, as the furtherance of religious worship, and the foreshadowing of that rest which “yet remaineth for the people of God⁸.”

The Lord's Day has now been delineated as closely as the nature of the records of the first two centuries will permit; it now remains to carry out the history, noting any particular influence that it may have exercised at different times over the Christian Church. The records of the first and second century are too short to admit of any thing beyond mere conjecture as to the effects produced by the observance of this day. This however seems certain,

³ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

⁴ Justin Martyr, Apolog. ii.

⁵ Acts xx. 16. sq.

⁶ Concil. Eliber. Can. 21. Concil. Sardic. Can. 11.

⁷ Hooker, Book v. chap. lxx. § 3, 4.

⁸ Hebr. iv. 9.

that it served to call to the minds of the early Christians the memory of the Lord Jesus Christ with greater vividness than anything else could have done. Every week they partook of the holy Eucharist which He had established, they testified by their posture the belief in His resurrection, they heard the declarations of the prophets read about His sufferings, and acknowledged their perfect fulfilment in the writings of the Evangelists. Every thing seemed forcibly to recall to their minds, the sufferings, death and glorification of their great Master, so that to deny Him was accounted worse than the bitterest death. When the aged Christian stood before the servant of a heathen emperor, he endured much till he was commanded to despise Christ; it was then those noble words burst from his lips: "Eighty and six years have I been His servant, and in nought has He wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my Saviour and my King?" "The heavy sword and the lofty cross, and the fury of the beasts, and the extreme punishment of the fire, and the protracted agonies of death¹," could not elicit from them a denial of that sacred name; and we doubt not that much of that unexampled nobleness of character and fearless avowal of their Redeemer was fostered by their constantly devoting to His service so great a portion of their time.

During all this time we meet with very few passages about the Sabbath, except in allusion to its abrogation by Christ. It seems however to have

¹ Martyrdom of Polycarp, § 9.

² Tertul. ad Martyras, § 4.

been undoubtedly observed by all of Jewish extraction; not indeed as a day of rest, but as a convenient opportunity of offering up prayers and praises to Him who was Lord of the Sabbath. Every thing was done for edification; some primitive churches might have had a great preponderance of Jews in their communion: it was natural that the seventh day should be dedicated to the service of God, but it can be positively affirmed, that the Lord's Day was always observed in such churches, *and with greater tokens of respect*; and that the Sabbath was not celebrated with any ceremonial rest. The "Constitutions" are very precise in their instructions as to the way in which the Sabbath ought to be kept, but, as it has before been said, they cannot be received in evidence to the usages of the first and second centuries.

The third century supplies very few allusions either to the Lord's Day or the Sabbath. Victorinus, in a fragment quoted by Dr. Routh³, alludes to the custom of fasting on the Sabbath, which appears now first to have obtained some degree of notice in the Western Church. The writers of the fourth century are much more numerous. The Church had now spread widely over all lands, and was constantly needing restrictive ordinances and definitions, which would have been wholly unfitted for the early times. Heresy was assuming a threatening aspect: on the one side, the Judaist was seeking to invade the rights of the Christian; on

³ *Reliquiæ Sacra*, Vol. III. p. 245.

the other, Arius was blasphemously assailing the divinity of the Son of God. As controversy increased, the writings of the fathers became more guarded and distinct, not only in the immediate subjects which formed the grounds for disputation, but in all other topics, whether they belonged to the doctrines or to the ceremonies of the Church.

The fourth century opens with the council of Eliberis (A.D. 305): this council is very strenuous in promoting the religious worship on the Lord's Day: it speaks very determinately against any who ventured to neglect the worship of the Lord upon this day¹: it threatened those who refused to attend the services of the Church with suspension and excommunication². Moreover, as the council of Gangra³ decides, it was considered at this period unlawful to hold any separate assembly: such an one was treated summarily as a heretic, and as a disturber of the peace of God's Holy Church. Fasting upon the Lord's Day was considered the gravest crime: to such the council of Gangra⁴ says "anathema maranatha." Later in the century, Ambrose classes offenders on this point with the Manichæans, and a few years afterwards, we find Augustine, in a letter to Casulanus, speaking with all his characteristic energy against such a practice, as a fear-

¹ Concil. Eliber. Canon 21.—"Si quis in civitate positus tres dominica, ecclesiam non accesserit, tanto tempore abstineat ut corruptus esse videatur."

² Ibid. Canon 28.

³ Concil. Gangra (A.D. 324). Canon 18.

⁴ Ibid. Canon 18. — Εἰ τις διὰ νομιζομένην ἄσκησιν ἐν τῇ Κυριακῇ νηστεύει ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

ful and horrible act of impiety⁵. It was a studied insult to the Saviour, to dedicate this day to mournfulness and fasting; as it sought to imply that He was only of a perfect but human nature, and not that only-begotten Son of the Father, who was of one substance with God, co-equal and co-eternal. Against such we need not be surprised to find the fathers directing every argument: such blasphemy was the sorest wound the Church ever received, and accordingly every rite which savoured of these impious tenets received the condemnation of doctors and bishops, and the anathema of councils. "Let him," says the council of Carthage⁶, "who studiously fasts on the Lord's Day be not considered a catholic." And shortly afterwards, just at the beginning of the fifth century, the council of Braga⁷ expressly states that such fasting was adopted purposely to exhibit a disbelief in the incarnation of Christ, by evil and heady men, like the Cerdonites, Marcionites, Manichæans, and Priscillianists, all of whom the council declares to be accursed. At the close of the century several ecclesiastical censures are directed against persons who frequented the games upon this day. The fourth council of Carthage⁸ threatens offenders with excommunication. The third council⁹ of the same city forbids the sons of clergymen going to or exhibiting games, lest they

⁵ "Per quod factum est ut jejunium diei dominici horribilius haberetur."—(Epist. 36. Benedictine Edit. of 1836).

⁶ 4. Concil. Carthag. Can. 64.
Canon 88.

⁷ Concil. Bracarens I. Can. 4. A.D. 411.

⁹ Canon 11. A.D. 397.

should be causes of offence to others. Nothing was more severely censured by the early Christians than the games and the circus. "Doubtest thou," says Tertullian¹, "that in this crisis in which the devil is raging against the Church, all the angels are looking down from heaven, and marking every man whosoever hath spoken blasphemy, whosoever hath listened to it, whosoever hath ministered with his tongue or with his ears to the devil against God? Wilt thou not then flee from these chains of the enemies of Christ, this seat of pestilences, whose very atmosphere is defiled with the voices of the wicked." These pomps and allurements to vice proved a sore thorn in the side of the Church; so that it is not strange that they should have besought for imperial edicts against their celebration upon this day. At the close of the century we find a famous law of Theodosius the first, complying with the request of the Church, and enforcing by the civil sword the ordinances and injunctions put forth by ecclesiastical authority. Honorius (A.D. 399) did not so entirely accede to the petitions made by the bishops, as he satisfied himself with merely interdicting the heathen rites which generally formed a part of the games.

But there was yet another source of grievance to the Church, which made its appearance earlier in this century, and greatly interrupted the proper observance of the Lord's Day. We are informed by Eusebius, that the first day of the week was a court-day among

¹ Tertull. de Spectaculis, xxvii. Oxford translation.

the heathens; hence any Christians who had a cause at stake, spent their days in the courts rather than in the house of God. To no purpose did the bishops of the Church inveigh against this great crime: as long as the courts were open, the Christians used to frequent them; nor could ecclesiastical censures have put a stop to this growing evil, if the emperor Constantine had not interposed, and forbid all suits, except in cases of charity or extreme necessity, on this day. The edict is too well known to need quotation. His example was followed by Valentinian the first, in whose reign all arrests on this day, and all exactions of the public dues, were prohibited under the severest penalties; all which laws were subsequently confirmed by Valentinian the second². The sanctity of the day was thus greatly promoted in this century, as its proper observance was equally enforced by the fathers of the Church and the emperors. Before this time it had been too frequently polluted by deeds of violence and cruel persecutions, which were studiously exercised upon this day, as a greater number of Christians would be found together in one place. The change indeed effected in this century was very great: when we contrast the perilous meetings in deserts or in secret places, with assemblies upon the same day, not only permitted, but especially sanctioned by the ruling powers, we have the record of one of the greatest changes this day underwent from its earliest origin. All impediments to its proper observance were passing

² See Cod. Th. Lib. viii. tit. 8.

away; and though under some emperors its sanctity was occasionally invaded by the license of the games, it had nevertheless acquired, at the end of this century, a stability and permanence that has lasted down to the present day. When an emperor made his soldiers rest from military duties, bidding those who were Christians go to the house of God, and even those who were of heathen extraction, to the open fields, that they might there worship the God and Father of all mankind¹—when all servile employments were considered acts of dishonour before God—when the judge was bidden to visit the prisoners, to ensure their being properly tended on this holy day²,—we cannot doubt that the festival was reverently and lovingly celebrated by all Christians of this century, and consigned to the veneration and guardianship of posterity, with an earnestness which exerted an unseen but mighty influence on its future destiny.

We may indeed not unreasonably suppose that this change extended to the other festivals, and especially to that of the Sabbath, which had continued in the Church from the birth of our Saviour, though it by no means partook of the reverence awarded to the day of the Lord. Still it was in existence, and had been observed for great and wise purposes for upwards of two hundred years. It would not then be improbable to suppose that it also had received additions, sufficient to entitle it to a higher position than it hitherto occupied. The writers of this century

¹ingham, xx. Ch. ii. § 3.

² Cod. Th. Lib. ix. tit. 3.

abundantly confirm this supposition. The author of the "De Semente" states the custom of Christians meeting together on the Sabbath-day for the purposes of religious worship: at the same time he strenuously rebuts the charge of Judaism. This statement is valuable, as it is probably one of the earliest allusions to positive religious offices upon the Sabbath-day in the Christian churches: it was certainly customary to observe the Sabbath with greater attention than the ordinary week-days from the earliest times, but it never appears to have amounted to the regular attendance at Divine worship implied by this writer. In the preceding century the difference is very striking. Origen frequently alludes to service on the Lord's Day, but is entirely silent about the Sabbath: he seems only to have acknowledged three festivals, the Lord's Day, Pentecost and Easter³. The ecclesiastical historians are great authorities on this point, as they lived at the commencement of the fifth century. Socrates⁴, who flourished as early as 439 A.D. mentions that assemblies were held on the Saturday; that on that day the Scriptures were read, and that the Holy Communion was also administered. From this we may safely infer, that from about the commencement of the fourth century the Sabbath began to assume a considerable place among the Christian festivals. At first there would be considerable misunderstanding: the Judaizing party would not fail to seize the opportunity of recalling the Christians to

³ Orig. *contra Celsum*, VIII. p. 758.

⁴ Lib. v. 21, 22. VI. 8.

superstitious rest, they would naturally endeavour to institute comparisons between the two days, and insensibly wile away the heathen converts to religious duties on the Sabbath rather than on Sunday. In some churches where the Judaists were numerous, the error might have attained a perilous height. Some of these suppositions appear strongly confirmed by a decree of the Laodicean council¹, to the following effect: "Christians are not to Judaize and abstain from work on the Sabbath, but they are to pay superior honour to the Lord's Day, and, if it be possible, to spend it in Christian relaxation. But if they be detected of Judaism, let them be anathema." Again, the same council commands the reading of the Gospel on that day, and in two other canons alludes to the day in company with the Lord's Day. This would at once have the effect of removing any errors that might have crept into the Church: thus the council, in common with the authorities of that age, tends to increase the *religion* of the day, but at the same time it makes it strictly a Christian festival; the Gospel is to be read, the Holy Communion is permitted, the commemorations of martyrs² during Lent are shared by it in common with the Lord's Day. Every decree is positively opposed to Judaizing Christians: the day is wrested from them, and converted into a festival of the Catholic Church.

These statements will serve to explain many passages in contemporary writers, which, viewed by them-

¹ Concil. Laod. Can. 29. A.D. 363.

² Ibid. Can. 51.

selves, may appear strange and unwarranted. "Know you not," says Gregory of Nyssa³, "that the two days are own brothers, so that if thou offend against one, thou wilt come in collision with the other." This passage was but in accordance with the spirit of the age. Again, if we be right in assigning "the Constitutions" to the close of this century, they will also serve to demonstrate the same feeling with regard to the day. The allusions are very frequent, the Sabbath is mentioned always in company with the Lord's Day, and not uncommonly put first in order⁴.

If we pursue the enquiry farther into the fifth century, we still trace the same feeling. Cassian⁵ states that in some of the Egyptian Churches the service was the same on both days, and that the communion was celebrated on both. Basil again mentions it as one of the four days which were observed with peculiar attention in the course of each week. After this period the religious observance of the Sabbath began to decline as rapidly as it rose, and after two or three centuries it entirely disappears; for as soon afterwards as the close of the sixth century, Gregory the Great⁶ states the renewal of the Sabbath to be the mark of Antichrist. Gregory may probably allude to the Judaical observance; but still he could never have used so bold an expression if the day had retained any of its former sanctity. It is exceedingly

³ Greg. Nyssa. Orat. de Castig.

⁴ See Book VII. 23. VIII. 33. v. 20. II. 59.

⁵ Lib. II. c. 6. Lib. III. c. 2.

⁶ Greg. Epist. Lib. XI. 3.

difficult to trace the exact decline of this day in the different Churches. It might have lingered on longer in the East than in the West¹, as the Æthiopic Church² seems to have retained it to a late period; but certainly in the greater part of Christendom it began to decline before the end of the fifth century.

Throughout the account of its rapid progress, it cannot fail to have struck the reader, that the Sabbath seems to have been far less observed in the Roman Church than in the Eastern Churches. Cassian has perhaps too boldly affirmed that the "Latins never observed the Sabbath³," but certainly there was a marked difference between the observances of the East and West. We proceed briefly to investigate the nature and causes of the difference.

The nature of the difference was simply this: The Latin Church observed the Sabbath as a fast-day, while all the Eastern Churches held a festival on the same day, being however agreed in one point, viz. fasting on the *Sabbatum Magnum* before Easter. The earliest mention of a fast being publicly ordained on the Saturday, is made in the twenty-sixth Canon of the Council of Eliberis; where "*superpositions* of fasting" are enjoined. This custom is supposed by Bingham to have proceeded from the fast on Friday, by the adding or *superposition* of so many hours to

¹ Cf. Concil. Quinisext. (682. A. D.) Can. 80. Can. 55.

² Scaliger de Emendat. temporum, Lib. VII. p. 683.

³ Cassian, Coll. III. c. 10. *Latinorum ecclesia nunquam Sabbatum*
habuit.

the Friday as to prolong the fast into the succeeding day. As the fourth century advanced, the habit became strongly confirmed in some churches of the West, while in the East it was steadily and consistently opposed. The Eastern Churches clung tenaciously to the practice of the first two centuries, in which no such fast is even distantly alluded to: on the contrary, it is positively stated that there was no fast on Saturday, or the Lord's Day⁴. They had also great and cogent reasons which impelled them studiously to maintain the Saturday festival. The probable reason was the impious conduct of Marcion, who early in the second century maintained the following blasphemous tenets: That there was one God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; a second, who was the God of the Jews; and a third, who represented the origin of evil and sin. To act consistently with such heretical positions, he showed all possible contempt for the Sabbath as peculiar to the God of the Jews: "Since," says he, "the seventh day is the festival of the God of the Jews, who made the world and rested thereon, let us spend it in fasting, that we may not do that which appertaineth to the worship of the God of the Jews⁵." The Sabbath-day also furnished this heretic with another argument, by which he endeavoured to assail the divinity of the Son of God. The very fact of our Saviour having performed cures upon the Sabbath, in order that He might teach the Jews the true observance of it, was

⁴ Tertull. de Jejun. Cap. xv.

⁵ Epiphanius, Hæres. XLII. cap. 2.

cited by Marcion as an instance of Christ opposing the will of Him who rested on that day and sanctified it¹. Marcion was afterwards followed by the Eustathians, Marcionites, Sabbatians, Adelphians, and Valentinians; so that the only way in which the Catholic Church could disown such tenets, was by making the Sabbath a festival, and so testifying that they honoured that God, who is alike God both of the Jew and the Gentile. As the century advanced, the practice of fasting was more severely censured: the Canons of the Apostles, which probably belong to this era, strongly forbid both clergy and laity: if one of the clergy persisted in fasting on the Sabbath, excepting of course the Sabbatum Magnum, he was to be straightway deposed; if a layman, he was to be excommunicated. The African Church appears to have been divided on the subject, but leant mainly to the custom of the first and second centuries. Augustine has left a very long and valuable letter² upon the controversy, in which he endeavours to confute an opponent of the name of Urbicus: the name is probably fictitious, and intended to designate some peculiar member of the Church of Rome, and an inhabitant of that city. Incidentally he mentions the Lord's Day, with the greatest reverence; he denounces fasting upon it as a heinous crime: he then proceeds to consider the case of the Sabbath. Rest was confessedly annulled; the plucking of the ears of corn was intended to rebuke its defenders

¹ Tertull. c. Mar. Lib. iv.

² Ep. 36. Benedict. Edit. 1836.

and was also highly applicable to those who fasted; for the feeling of hunger was quite sufficient to justify the disciples in our Saviour's eyes. Fasting, if sanctioned on the grounds of his opponent's argument, would tend to elevate the Sabbath above the Lord's Day, as insensibly conveying the idea of a necessity for the more rigid observance. The true fasts of the Church he defines to be on the fourth and sixth days of the week; on the fourth, because the Jews took counsel against Christ; and on the sixth, because they crucified Him. He concludes with quoting the advice of his preceptor, Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. When Augustine asked him what course he ought to pursue; whether he was to fast, in compliance with the custom of the Roman Church, or keep a festival, after the manner of Milan, Ambrose expressed his opinion in the following notable words: "When I am here, I do not fast on the Sabbath; when I am at Rome, I do fast: so to whatever Church you happen to go, comply with its institutions, if you wish to avoid receiving or giving offence."

The adherents of the fast did not entirely agree in the account of its origin. Augustine, with others, attributes it to the tradition that S. Peter, before his contest with Simon Magus, fasted on the Sabbath: this is further confirmed by S. Peter's connexion with the Church of Rome; as it was reasonable that in after years they should invest the most minute events in their first Bishop's career with an especial garb of sanctity. Cassian assigns the same reason. Inno-

cent I.¹ deduces it from the sorrow and anguish of spirit in which the apostles spent the Saturday during which their Heavenly Master lay in the grave. This latter reason is the one usually assigned by modern writers of the Romish Church, but it seems to have no higher claims to authority than as a conjecture of Innocent. The fast was probably a weekly repetition of the "Sabbatum Magnum."

The custom however never extended very far, for at Milan there are no traces of any other observance than as a festival. In the beginning of the sixth century, in the Council of Agatha, under Alaric, fasting was prescribed on every day in Lent, except the Lord's Day: but the terms in which the canon was framed² seem to imply that it was not by any means a general custom to fast on the seventh day. Finally, the Trullan Council made an effort to recall the Church of Rome from this peculiar usage, and plainly point their fifty-fifth Canon against this exception to the ordinances of the early fathers. This council was held about the close of the seventh century, and clearly states that the chief error of the Roman Church was in fasting upon the Sabbaths during Lent;—a time in which the custom could have been most easily defended or tolerated. Perhaps this may give room for a conjecture that the Sabbath had so far fallen into desuetude at Rome, as to be celebrated

¹ Innocent I. Can. 24.

² Concil. Agath. Canon 8. *Placuit etiam ut omnes ecclesie filii exceptis diebus dominicis, in quadragesima, etiam in die Sabbati sacerdotali ratione et discretionis communione jejurent.*

only during Lent, and then in the way peculiarly appropriate to that Church, by fasting.

And here at length ends all account of the Sabbath as a separate day. Before however entirely dismissing this portion of the subject, it is necessary to state briefly, that not even in its palmiest days did the Sabbath rank on an equality with the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day was, as it is termed in an Epistle ascribed to Ignatius, "the Queen of Days³;" it admitted no rival, it suffered no infringement on its sanctity. The necessity for this unity is more evident, when we consider to whom the day was so peculiarly dedicated. To wilfully neglect, or sullenly refuse to take any share in its sacred offices, was not only to be guilty of disturbing the peace of the Church, but of casting premeditated scorn upon Him, who as on that day completed the salvation of mankind. On this account this holy day was particularly separated from other festivals by distinctive rites, which were the symbols of the supremacy and royalty assigned to it by the author of the Epistle. Thus on the Sabbath, which approached it most nearly, there was, first, no obligation to pray standing; secondly, no laws which forbade pleadings; thirdly, no interdiction of games and shows in the circus; and lastly, no prohibition to perform works of husbandry. For it would appear that the Christians

³ Epist. Interp. ad Magnes ix. τὴν βασιλίδαν τὴν ὑπάτην πασῶν ἡμερῶν. [The idea seems derived from the Jewish Rabbis, by whom the Sabbath was called Malcah.]

only abstained from work during Divine service upon that day; while on the Sunday all work was suspended that could in any way disturb the peaceful frame of mind in which the Christian was to perform his religious offices. The four points of difference are sufficient to show that the Lord's Day was the greatest festival of the Church, and that it maintained its position as fully when it appeared most likely to be rivalled, as at any other period either before or afterwards.

We must now return from our long, but necessary digression, to the further progress of the Lord's Day during the fifth century. Ecclesiastical authority could go no further: it had elevated it into the most important festival of the Church, and herein had closely followed out the intention of the primitive fathers, and the unexpressed commands of the apostles. The councils denounced, not only the habitual neglecter, but even such as had absented themselves only three times: the punishment was summary: the layman was ejected from Christian communion, the priest was suspended from the future discharge of his office, unless he humbled himself by sincere penitence. The only additional sanction this holy day could receive was that of the civil ruler. And this was not withheld: for though, at the commencement of this century, Honorius in the West had somewhat grudgingly acceded to the request made by the fathers of the fifth Council of Carthage, that he would put a stop to games upon the Lord's Day;

Theodosius II. in the East more than compensated for it by his famous law¹, forbidding all sports and exhibitions on that day throughout his empire; and extending the same injunction to Christmas-day, Epiphany, and Easter. There is added to this noted law the following declaration, that no greater honour could be paid to the emperor, than paying that due to the Lord of Hosts, from whom all earthly power emanates. Leo and Anthemius expressly confirmed the same decree, and furthermore added, that if their birthdays fell upon the Lord's Day they were not to be observed till the following day. Theodosius also forbade any lawsuits being entered into, excepting only the trials of the Isaurian pirates, on the principle that wicked designs are to be frustrated on any day².

The West Roman Empire was now in its death-struggle with the various barbarous nations around it: imperial authority was now but a name; yet so firmly were the rites of the Church established, and especially this one of the observance of the Lord's Day, that history has handed down the piety of Theodorick, king of the Ostrogoths, as evinced by his attendance on the vigils or antelucan meetings which ushered in the Lord's Day³. Theodorick was an Arian; and this may serve to account for the strictness with which he complied with this ceremony, as the Arian was ever ambitiously striving to vie

¹ See Cod. Theodos. Lib. xv. Tit. 5. Leg. 2.

² Cod. Theodos. Lib. ix. Tit. 35.

³ Bingham, Book xx. Chap. 2.

with the orthodox Christian in zeal and public acts of devotion. With the reasons however we have nothing to do: it is sufficient simply to recount a fact which at once sets the supposition aside, that this irruption of the Huns in the West might have interrupted the performance of the ceremonies peculiar to the day. All the seductions of the games, the festive pomp and the sports of the circus, "those satanic assemblies," (as Chrysostom denotes them,) could no longer be a cause of annoyance to the fathers of the Church. The games, and all the laws which had prohibited or supported them, had now alike passed away. The-court days and litigations could no longer seduce away the Christian from the public services to Him whose name he bore: all these sources of disquietude being now buried in the ruins of the Roman empire.

But as God, for his own wise purposes, has not destined the Church to be free from all disturbing causes, lest in its pride of heart it should forget that zealous and untiring devotion which is always most elicited by adversity; so in the history before us, when the Lord's Day appeared safe from desecration by pomp and festival, a fresh danger, which had for some time lurked unseen, now threatened the sanctity of that holy festival. The danger to which we allude arose from the increased performance of servile works on the Lord's Day, and especially those of husbandry. From the earliest times, the fathers of the Church had been strongly opposed to any

labours in the fields upon this day, but as they were beset on all sides by Judaical teachers, who would not fail to have wrested any positive declarations into sentiments favourable to their own superstitious rest, they were obliged to be guarded in their censures, and could not advisedly use that language which they would otherwise have adopted to such offenders. The very offence itself had a certain excuse which could not always be censured. The harvests of the earth were not to lie exposed to the violence of a storm, when a few hours after the performance of the duties of religion might be profitably employed in rescuing them from destruction. Intestine commotions or open war might sanction the same sort of occupation; and as liberty ever increases into license, the same labours might continue when the immediately suggesting causes were entirely removed. The excuses would assume a greater plausibility; instances would be cited from the Holy Scriptures, which would be forced into an interpretation which would countenance this unholy toil, until at length the voice of the Church would be raised against the offenders. For the above reasons, the councils and public edicts did not much allude to this growing custom, till about the sixth century, although the fathers, one and all, strove to impart to the Lord's Day a degree of repose and holy calmness which was quite incompatible with the weariness and sweating brow of the labourer.

If we briefly recapitulate, we shall see that the origin of the evil was in a decree of the emperor Con-

stantine, in which he licensed Sunday's toils, on the ground that it often happened that this day was most suitable for sowing and planting vines, and that it was permitted to mankind to use such opportunities conceded by Divine benevolence¹. This was the foundation of the evil custom : it here obtained sanction from the highest civil authority, and probably would not have been the cause of much scandal in the Church, if the permission had not been abused : moreover, those abiding in the country were not open to those temptations of utterly desecrating the day, which environed the inhabitants of towns. But the evil was still great, and suited ill with the increased observance of the festivals of the Church which we have traced through this century. Accordingly, at the close of the fifth century, Leo² reverses, and even implies a strong censure of the former edict. He forbids artisan and husbandman alike from pursuing their labours, instancing, in the most bold manner, the rest on the Jewish Sabbath, as a strong reason why Christians should much more reverence a day of which the Sabbath was but a shadow. Rapidly surveying the succeeding ages, which contain no very memorable change, we still see the same evil censured : the Councils of the Church now strongly condemned the practice, particularly in Gaul. In the year A.D. 585, the well known Council of Matiscon³ uses these memo-

¹ Cod. Inst. Lib. III. tit. 12. — Quoniam frequenter evenit, ut non aptius alio die frumenta sulcis, aut vinee scrobibus mendantur.

² Leo. Constitut. LIV.

³ II. Concil. Matic.

rable words, after a short preamble upon the great benefits conveyed to Christians on that day: "Let none of you busy yourselves in wranglings, or in pleading causes, or place the yoke on the necks of his beasts of burden. . . . Let your eyes and your hands be stretched out to God through the whole of that day, for it is a perpetual day of rest, and is noted in the law and in the prophets, under the shadows of the seventh day." And it is afterwards added, that this was to be done, not from a wish of abstaining from labour, but of turning away our thoughts from the cares and anxieties of daily life. The fear of Judaism was removed, and the Church spoke freely: even Gregory, whom we have previously quoted as condemning strict sabbatical rest, does not hesitate to declare: "that on the Lord's Day we must cease from daily labour, and bend all our energies to devotion⁴." Whatever was of good tendency in the imperial decrees was specially revived; for in the second Council of Orleans, which took place about the middle of the sixth century, the Provost, or head of the Church, is directed to visit the prisoners on that day, and provide for their comfort: this had formed the subject of a decree of Honorius one hundred and fifty years before. There were, however, continual oscillations from over-much laxity to Judaical strictness: for the purport of the twenty-first Canon of the third Council of Orleans, under King Childebert, is to do away with an impres-

⁴ Gregory (A.D. 590.), Ep. 111. Book 21.—Dominico die a labore terreno cessandum est, atque omni modo orationibus insistendum.

sion, that it was not right to ride upon horses, dress victuals, and other things of a similar nature.

The Councils of Tours, Rheims, and Mentz, subsequently enjoined the same Christian rest.

We shall now turn our eyes to the Councils and decrees of our own country, which are sufficiently numerous and explicit. In a Council¹ held by Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury, towards the close of the seventh century, there are several careful instructions about the nature of the rest on Sunday, as deduced from the practice of the Greek and Roman Churches. Again, a Council² holden under Ina, king of the West Saxons, provides for several cases of compulsory labour: if a slave be ordered by his master to work on the Lord's Day, he is to go free, and his master is to pay a fine: if he work voluntarily, he is to be beaten. In a Council held by Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, injunctions are given to ensure the due observance of the day: and again a few years later, A.D. 784, Egbert, Archbishop of York, published several canons, one of which relates to the Lord's Day, and is written with singular accuracy: he briefly narrates the history of its origin, and enjoins a spiritual rest upon that day, and an abstinence from servile works; which he quaintly explains to be *sins*; because he who commits sin is the slave thereof. The subject appears to have met with much attention in the British Church, for in some laws of King Alured,

¹ Labbæi. Concil. Vol. XII. p. 25. Circa A.D. 680.

² Ibid. p. 57. Circa 690.

A.D. 876, both the Danes and the English are prohibited from labouring on any festival; and on the Lord's Day no malefactor is to be put to death, if it can possibly be avoided. King Ethelstan forbids all merchandize; Edgar defines the exact length of the Lord's Day; Canute confirms the law of Edgar, and prohibits not only buying and selling, but hunting, and all worldly occupations. The same is confirmed by several decrees immediately preceding and subsequent to the Conquest. So careful was the Church, even in those changeful and troublous times, not to sanction the least deviation from the observances and rites of antiquity. As in former ages husbandry, so now in these latter times, buying and selling, was the peculiar act of violation against which both kings and councils directed their laws or ecclesiastical menaces. The changes caused by invasions or revolutions could not now affect the ordinances of a Church, which was fast assuming a power before which kings themselves bowed: but still, if we may judge from the tone in which many of the canons and edicts are written, it would appear that the promulgators were actuated by a deep-seated reverence for all the ordinances of the primitive Church, and especially for this one pertaining unto the Lord's Day. We find also repeated mention of the Saturday, under the title *Sabbatum*, but never the slightest allusion to it as a day of rest, or of peculiar worship. The name remained, the sanctity had entirely passed away.

At the beginning of the twelfth century the sab-

batical controversy was renewed for a short time with great vigour, after its long pause of nearly six hundred years. Peter de Bruis began to broach doctrines, which savoured more of the dregs of Judaism than of Christian truth. Superstitious rest and rigorous cessation from every occupation were strictly enjoined with such confidence and positiveness, that the Sabbatists appeared to have suffered no diminution of their acrimony and dogmatism, although these discordant elements had not been called into activity upon this subject for so many years. Peter de Bruis was burnt for heresy A.D. 1126, and his followers, after having been severely censured by Bernard, and indirectly by the whole train of earlier writers, were speedily forgotten. They had however stirred up the waters of strife, and the commotion had not subsided in the beginning of the ensuing century. In the year 1201, during the archiepiscopate of Hubert Walter, Eustace, Abbot of Flay, returned to England infected with the taint of these sabbatarian positions: he went from place to place preaching up the stricter observance of the Sunday, which was to begin at three o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, and continue till the dawn of Monday. In this definition of time, there was nothing very strange or unprecedented, as it had been so prescribed in the laws of Canute and Edgar. But the strictness was eminently Judaical, and descended to the most ordinary occupations. To confirm the authority of his doctrines, he blasphemously exhibited a letter purporting to be from our

Saviour, and miraculously found on the altar of S. Simeon, at Golgotha, in which his own tenets were upheld in the most rigorous language¹. The doctrine was favourably received by the priests and people, but strongly opposed by the king, whereupon miracles were produced to ratify the injunctions: a carpenter was struck with paralysis for working on that day; a mill-wheel refused to obey a mass of rushing water: bread withstood the heat of the oven. These false miracles were soon forgotten; for about 1237, in some constitutions published by one of the bishops, trading and mercantile transactions are simply forbidden, as interfering with the religion of the day, without any allusion to the doctrines of Eustace². Forty years afterwards, in a council held at Lambeth by Archbishop Peckham, the fourth commandment is explained: it is there shown that the ceremonial observance in the Old Testament has been superseded by the observance of the Lord's Day³. A few years afterwards, in a synod at Exeter under Bishop Quivil, the people are commanded to attend Divine worship on Sunday, "labouring six other days for the meat that perishes." In the year 1360, Simon Islip, Archbishop of Canterbury, publishes a letter enjoining prayers to be made for the king, and the Lord's Day to be more strictly observed. In it he comments on the laxity of the times, the revelry and drunkenness, and wilful neglect of holy offices⁴. There would seem to have

¹ Spelman's *Councils*, edit. 1664, p. 130.

² *Ibid.* p. 238.

³ *Ibid.* p. 333.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 509.

been a prevailing disregard of Sunday, for in the same year, John of Thursby, Archbishop of York, forbids all games and all trading in the same tone as the Archbishop of Canterbury. One hundred years afterwards, George Nevile, Archbishop of York, holds a provincial Council, and publishes his Constitutions, in which reference is made to the fourth commandment, exactly in the same terms as those of Archbishop Peckham.

But a great change was now fast drawing nigh: the soiled vestments of Popery were now being cast away, and the Church was reasserting its former purity. Many rites were in consequence wholly abolished, others fell into disuse; while a third moiety were retained. Among these last was the observation of the Lord's Day. It seems to have suffered no change, either by addition to or diminution from the sanctity which had been diffused around it by the testimony of fifteen hundred years. There was no leaning to Judaism; the reformed Church raised her voice alike against those who wilfully neglected or superstitiously observed this weekly festival: she forbade all trading, and all thoughtful and busy cares for the things that perish, as tending to divert the mind from the contemplation of Him who, on this day, became the author and finisher of our faith; on the other hand, she rejected the lifeless inaction of the Judaist, as an element foreign to the service of Him who consecrated this day by active and practical displays of His Divine benevolence.

If we examine some of the explanations of the fourth commandment propounded immediately before the Reformation, we still discern the same spirit as in the declarations of bygone ages. In the *Institution of a Christian Man*, published A.D. 1537, the fourth commandment is thus explained: "This precept as concerning rest from bodily labour on the seventh day, pertained only to the Jews in the Old Testament, before the coming of Christ, and not to us Christian people in the New Testament; nevertheless as concerning the spiritual rest (which is figured and signified by the corporeal rest), that is to say, rest from carnal works of the flesh and all manner of sin, this precept remaineth still, and bindeth them that belong to Christ, and not for every seventh day only, but for all days, hours, and times. And although all Christian people be bound unto these things (i. e. spiritual rest and acts of piety and mercy) by this commandment, yet the Sabbath-day, which is called Saturday, is not now prescribed and appointed thereto, as it was to the Jews; but instead of the Sabbath-day succeedeth the Sunday, and many other holy and feastful days which the Church has ordained from time to time." It is needless to say that these formularies are of no authority, being written before the accession of Edward the Sixth: they were published for "the intent of establishing Christian quietness and unity among us, and avoiding contentious opinions." They were however drawn up under Cranmer's superintendence, and are useful in show-

ing the sentiments of those who were already firmly fixing the corner stones of the Reformation.

Pursuing the enquiry beyond the Reformation, we still find a recapitulation of the foregoing opinions. "The Jews," says Cranmer in his Catechism, "were commanded in the Old Testament to keep the Sabbath-day, and they observed it every seventh day, called the Sabbath or Saturday. But we Christian men in the New Testament are not bound to such commandments in Moses' law, and therefore we now keep no more the Sabbath or Saturday as the Jews did, but we observe the Sunday and some other days." The thirteenth Canon (A.D. 1603) is equally precise and definite. "All manner of persons within the Church of England shall from henceforth celebrate and keep the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, and other holy days, &c.," (amongst which, the Saturday of every week is none). These two extracts will sufficiently declare the sentiments of the reformed Church.

Yet there were unquiet spirits in the Church who sought to bring back the elements of Israelitish bondage; and against such the Canon seems to have been expressly directed: for in the year 1592 Fuller notes one Richard Greenham who was superstitiously strict in the observance of this day. And shortly afterwards, in 1595, Dr. Bound is related to have been especially vigorous in endeavouring to enforce Judaical strictness. He published a book in which he endeavoured to maintain that the command in

the Old Testament was moral and perpetual—that since all other Jewish rites were taken away this one was to remain,—that the rest was to be notable and singular,—that no man was even to speak of pleasures. The apparent purity of this doctrine ensnared many learned and pious men; some of whom embraced it on conviction, others from the mistaken idea that by countenancing this position they would eventually do good. Within six years the controversy had reached such a height that it was said at the time, *that the Sabbath itself had no rest*¹. Not long afterwards, in the sixteenth year of the reign of King James, while that king was passing through Lancashire, the strictness with which the Lord's Day was observed was such as to induce him to publish a Declaration, whereby certain sports and recreations were allowed after Divine service. This caused the greatest annoyance to the strict party in that county; and in other quarters the subject was discussed with great warmth. There was a general apprehension that the Declaration would be extended over all England: some were prepared to positively refuse reading the Declaration; others intended to read it, but openly preach against it; thus setting, as Fuller expresses it, their God against their king. This extreme strictness, independently of the false notions on which it was based, was extremely injurious to the interests of the Church. The Romanists

¹ Fuller's Church History, Book ix. Anno Elizabeth 35. I need hardly observe that Fuller here uses the word Sabbath for Sunday.

used it as an argument against the Church of England, and eventually caused many secessions. All these discordant elements were continually in motion until the ninth year of king Charles the First, when they broke forth with accumulated violence. Theophilus Bradborn, a minister of Suffolk, renewed the strife by openly maintaining,

I. That the Sabbath-day's observation was binding on Jews and Christians.

II. That the fourth commandment was simply and purely moral.

III. That the Lord's Day is a simple working-day—and that it was superstitious to make it a Sabbath in virtue of the fourth commandment.

The first and second positions might have been passed over and soon forgotten; but the third was so directly in opposition to the practice of the Church in all ages, that Dr. White, bishop of Ely, was formally appointed to confute him. The answer was made in rather a sharp tone, and consequently provoked the Sabbatarians to reply: the contest then became very severe; books were written on all sides, and every argument urged that could be brought to bear directly or indirectly upon the subject. Fuller divides the Church into three parties relative to the worship on the Lord's Day: of which the first formed the extreme sabbatarian party, who always affected the word Sabbath as a watchword; affirming that the fourth commandment was as *literally* binding

upon Christians as it had been upon the Jews. The second party maintained the contrary with such vehemence, as to leave room for the third or moderate party, who seemed to have selected the most important positions from the two others, and woven them into a solid and consistent form. The main point of contention was the legality of the Sunday sports; as these constantly proceeded from innocent recreations to wicked and absorbing pursuits, which wiled away the unwary into open license and profanity. Somersetshire was the scene in which the strife was hottest: Judge Richardson endeavoured to suppress these sports as tending greatly to the increase of idleness and vice; upon which the Archbishop of Canterbury interfered, considering his authority had been infringed on by the civil officers. The king then made a declaration exactly similar to that made by King James in 1618; this was productive of great licentiousness, so that it was confidently asserted by the stricter party, that the neglect of Sunday had called down the vengeance of God as manifested in the complicated horrors of the civil war.

There was undoubtedly much acrimony and evil feeling throughout this controversy: still the struggle was not entirely unprofitable, as it tended to elicit vast stores of learning from the various disputants. The writers at this period are the great sources from which the most valuable information has been drawn; their research was deep, their references to Christian antiquity varied and copious, their phraseology guarded.

The subject was previously ill-understood ; men disputed laxly and carelessly, so that the main points of enquiry might never have been so accurately developed, if the question had not been raised and subsequently conducted with earnestness and vigour.

After God had been pleased to put an end to the great rebellion, we have records in the reign of King Charles the Second¹ in which all the prohibitions of former times were renewed : buying and selling was strictly forbidden, all worldly labours were to be suspended, and all legal processes deferred except in the most aggravated cases : the preachers were enjoined to minister faithfully to the services of religion during this festival ; and to use their best endeavours in recalling the people to a better observance of it. In 1689 William the Third ordered the statutes against the profanation of the Sabbath to be read ; and again in 1694, he gives injunctions that the bishops and clergy use their best endeavours for ensuring the proper and legitimate observance of the day. From that period down to the present times no particular statutes have been published which at all affect the main question, or need find a place in this Essay : they relate principally to the ordinary occupations of life, and belong to a legal rather than a theological investigation.

We have thus endeavoured to trace the rise and progress of sabbatical institutions from the first ages of the world, through the long intervening space of

¹ 29 Car. II. c. 7.

nearly six thousand years, down to the present day. We have seen glimpses of a weekly festival in the history of the patriarchs:—we have seen it, defined by ritual observances and cessation from all labour, assume the character of a *sign* of God's covenant with his chosen people:—we have again seen it, in common with all the types and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, fade away at the coming of the Sun of Righteousness, and again reappear in a changed form, testifying week by week that He who redeemed us by His death “has by His resurrection begotten us again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away².”

² 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION.

OUR history is now brought to a close : the origin and the connected narrative of sabbatical institutions have been successively developed with such accompanying notices of the influence exerted by them upon Christians, as was necessary for a continuous history. It now remains only to notice briefly this influence as it extended over the Christian Church *generally* in past times, and so to make some few reflections upon the degree of observance to which Christians are authoritatively bound, even until time itself shall cease.

The very rite itself is sufficient to prove the existence of a Supreme Being who guides, disposes, and sustains all things : nothing could have been devised which could so surely have cemented into close union all true believers ; daily worship might have fallen into desuetude if it had not been accompanied with the solemnities of the Sabbath : the earlier inhabitants of the earth would have insensibly lapsed into a cold and barren service ; the Jews would have cast themselves back to the idolatrous worship, the pageants, and the sorceries of Egypt ; and the Christian might have lost sight of the perfectness of that all-sufficient sacrifice, whereby he was re-

deemed from a bondage more galling than the lash and the chain of the Egyptian taskmaster. We have before shown how closely rites and ceremonies entwine themselves around the heart of man; like the wild fig-tree, they cannot be eradicated and torn off without the dissolution and disruption of that to which they adhere. In this point of view we again cannot fail to admire and reverence that all-wise dispensation of God, by which the children of Israel were commanded to dedicate one day in every seven to the continual performance of a rite to which the mind of man was naturally predisposed. Every hour of the Sabbath, nay, even every smallest portion of time, could not fail to remind the Jew that he would best please Almighty God if he withheld his hand from all servile occupations upon this great day of deliverance. Nothing could have more forcibly recalled to his imagination the long years of hopeless servitude unrelieved by any intermission, when the very wish to pay meet honour to the God of his fathers was construed into the suggestions of idleness¹. The Passover and Feast of Tabernacles were *annual* witnesses of the mightiness of his deliverance; but the Sabbath, week by week, repeated its silent testimony, declaring that the God who created heaven and earth, and rested on the seventh day, was ~~the~~ God who delivered the Israelites from the house of bondage.

¹ Exod. v. 17.

The more closely we consider this Divine ordinance, the more excellent does it appear:—it was the great protest of the old world against polytheism, it was the badge of God's peculiar people. Circumcision had sometimes been partly adopted by neighbouring nations, but the worship on the seventh day was, as far as we have been able to find, exclusively confined to the children of Israel. For we have already shown that the notices in the old heathen poets are useful for nothing more than proving that sabbatical institutions were maintained by one particular people, and that from them they flowed, in obscure and perverted traditions, to some of the nations with whom they were most closely connected. Independently of other considerations, the Sabbath, or rather public worship on the seventh day, could not for a moment have held its ground in the heathen world: they would have needed some visible reason why they should have dedicated so great a portion of their time to services of religion. Their system of polytheism would have prevented it being consecrated to one God, and their imperfect rites would at once have prohibited the possibility of the day being devoted to their fabled deities in regular succession. The moment this rite was cast upon such barren ground it straightway withered; and the remembrance of its existence was transferred to a vague idea that the seventh day from some definite epoch, such as the full moon, was a day which in

some manner differed from those immediately preceding and succeeding it.

We may thus obtain a faint glimpse of the vast influence this institution must have exercised over a people so self-willed and stubborn as the Jews, when they would, in the darker portions of their history, willingly give themselves up to the sword of the destroyer, rather than violate the command of God by raising a hand in their own defence. It is true that this was entirely contrary to the spirit of the ordinances of that God who has declared that "He will have mercy rather than sacrifice;" but it is nevertheless useful in showing the incalculable influence the Sabbath must have had upon their minds. A few individuals separately may be found to die rather than violate a positive ordinance, but the martyrdom of a thousand at once is nearly unprecedented in the history of the world.

Nor was the influence of the Lord's Day less notable in the primitive Church. Amid all the troubles that environed them on every side, from the savage mandates of tyrants, or the intolerance of the heathen magistrates, they seem to have clung to the observance of this great festival with all the energy of the Jew heightened by the spiritual fortitude of the Christian. It may be that this was designed by Almighty God to be the great means of binding Christians together into an unity and fellowship, which was in itself a standing miracle. This however may be fairly asserted, that without

frequent intercommunion the Church must have been rent into numberless sects. The first converts would have insensibly superadded to the Christian form of worship such rites and ceremonies as had grown up with them in their period of ignorance and darkness. The Jew would have recalled to life the buried ceremonies of the Mosaic law, the Corinthian would have degraded the purity of the day by litigious wranglings and profane revelling. But when they so frequently met together, the tendencies of individuals would be checked by the salutary influence of those around them; and though the whole Church in any particular city, as in the last instances, might lean towards one prevailing error, its amount was indisputably diminished by the frequency of their spiritual intercourse, and the opportunities afforded them of resolving their doubts or amending their peculiar propensities by a reference to the decision of the united body. Nothing has contributed more to suppress heresy and schism than frequent opportunities of public worship. This was the general influence of the Lord's Day in the Christian Church.

Let us then, to whom so great a benefit has been freely offered, fail not to testify our deep thankfulness by a constant performance of all the duties of this holy day, lest haply, "we be not within the altar, and so fall short of the bread of God¹." Let us on this day frequently call to mind the stupen-

¹ Ignatius Ep. ad Eph. § v.

dous work of God's creation of the world which commenced as on this day, thus openly professing our belief in "God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth." Let us also call to mind our deliverance from darkness and the shadow of death by Him, who on this day asserted His Divine nature by rising again from the dead; hereby declaring in the face of men and angels that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Let us also reverently call to mind the descent of the Holy Spirit upon this great festival, which enabled the holy Apostles to go forth unto all lands teaching and preaching Christ crucified; hereby asserting our belief in "God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifies us and all the elect people of God."

Let us take such rest as may best conduce to the public and private avowal of these great articles of our belief. Let us neglect all the duties and cares of the world as interfering with our service to Almighty God, who has, through the practice of the holy Apostles, claimed our humble thanksgiving for our great and unspeakable deliverance effected on this day, and for our creation, preservation, and all the manifold blessings bestowed upon us. Finally, let every one strive to be able to use the noble words of Bishop Hall, with which we close this dissertation: "On this day I forget the world; and in a sort myself; and deal with my wonted thoughts as great men use, who at some times of their privacy forbid the

access of all suitors. Prayer, meditation, reading, hearing, preaching, singing, good conference, are the businesses of this day, which I dare not bestow on any work or pleasure but heavenly. I hate superstition on the one side, and looseness on the other, but I find it hard to offend in too much devotion; easy in profaneness. The whole week is sanctified by this day, and according to my care of this, is my blessing on the rest¹."

¹ Bishop Hall, letter to Lord Denny, Decade vi. Letter 1.

THE END.







